

BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE

# HISTORY *of* WAR



**LORD BRAMALL**  
ON THE NEW COLD WAR

**HITLER'S ARMoured ELITE**

FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS FROM THE  
NAZI STRUGGLE FOR NORMANDY

# SS PANZER

**WIN**  
Haynes Flak  
88 Manual

**1944**

## WARSAW UPRISING

Poland's underground army strikes back



**DAWN OF WAR**  
1938-1940

Rare images of the  
growth of the Third Reich

**ROYAL AUSTRALIA**  
**REGIMENT**

70 years serving  
queen and country



**BATTLE OF**  
**FRIEDLAND**

How Napoleon's genius  
crushed the Fourth Coalition



**P-51 MUSTANG**

IN THE COCKPIT OF THIS  
ICONIC AMERICAN FIGHTER

**THE POLISH CAVALRY** can trace its origins back to medieval times and the days of mounted knights. Poland being mostly a country of flatlands and fields is and was particularly well-suited for mounted forces to operate in.

Over the centuries, its knights and horse cavalry evolved into many different types of mounted military formations. Among the most famous were the heavily armoured 'winged hussars' and their more lightly armed 'uhlans' or lancers.

## GERMANY ATTACKS!

ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1939, the German invasion of Poland began... At that time the cavalry made up just over 10% of the entire Polish Army. They were organized into 11 cavalry brigades, each composed of 3 or 4 mounted regiments together with attached artillery and armoured units.

These horsemen were regarded as the elite fighting formation of the army and were among the first to encounter the invading Germans.

During the short but bloody campaign there were countless battles and skirmishes between Polish cavalry units and the invaders... mostly fought on foot.

There were however no less than 16 confirmed cavalry charges which, contrary to common belief, were nearly always successful.



## MYTHS & LEGENDS

The first and most famous charge happened on the opening day of the war... During the Battle of Krojanty, close to the

FoB159

FoB160

FoB163

FoB162

FoB161



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German/Polish border elements of the 18th Pomeranian Uhlan Regt. surprised a battalion of German infantry resting in some woods.

The Uhlans enthusiastically charged and the Germans fled in panic... Later it was also said that the Polish horsemen had attacked enemy armour with swords and lances... *Not quite true perhaps* but an almost mythic legend began which is still heard today... Even famed Nazi General Heinz Guderian believed the tale of

the gallant Polish Lancers taking on German tanks!

## K & C's POLISH LANCERS

Our latest mounted figures portray a group of Lancers charging at full gallop towards the enemy... As the officer raises his sabre menacingly his guidon bearer rides next to him with the national colours. A trumpeter is close by...

Elsewhere three other horsemen lower their lances as they prepare to close with their German foes. One unfortunate Lancer though has had his horse shot from under him!

7 figures will be released in 2 small groups (including a dismounted Lancer standing defiantly over his dead horse not shown here). All are available as single pieces and together make a dramatic and exciting vignette seldom seen in the world of toy soldiers!

## KING & COUNTRY

### AUTHENTIC HAND-MADE HISTORY

Available around the world wherever fine quality military miniatures are sold.

# Welcome

**“It mystifies me where these youngsters are getting the strength to live through such a storm of steel. They assure me... that they will defend the rubble to the last round”**

– Kurt Meyer, 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend

**A**fter the success of the D-Day landings, the Allies still had a long way to go to liberate France. Among the forces standing in their way were several SS Panzer Divisions – some of the most fanatical and feared units defending the Third Reich.

Understrength, poorly supplied and in many cases inexperienced in combat, these divisions nonetheless put up a tremendous defence, as British, Canadian and American forces pressed forward with the Allied invasion.

However, their brave conduct displayed during the bitter battle for Normandy is tainted by a number of brutal atrocities

committed by SS soldiers. These horrific crimes beyond the battlefield are a reminder of the inhumanity warfare can foster.



**Tim Williamson**  
Editor



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## CONTRIBUTORS



### TOM GARNER

This month Tom had the honour of speaking with Lord Bramall, KG, GCB, OBE, MC. The former chief of the defence staff and field marshal reflects on his military career, and his thoughts on the future of the armed forces (p. 34).



### MARIANNA BUKOWSKI

Marianna is a documentary filmmaker, producer and editor. Her short film, *Portrait of a Soldier*, tells the story of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. On page 54, she uncovers the heroism and tragedies in the fight to liberate Poland's capital.



### DAVID SMITH

This month David explores the iconic battlefield of Friedland, which saw one of Napoleon's greatest victories and sealed the fate of the Fourth Coalition. Follow each stage of this crucial battle, blow by blow, starting over on page 46.

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**WORLD OF TANKS**

This issue's cover image is from **World of Tanks**, the free online multiplayer game with over 100 million players worldwide.

To learn more and join the fight today, visit [worldoftanks.eu](http://worldoftanks.eu)

# SS PANZERS THE LAST STAND



**24** The ferocious and determined SS panzer divisions make a desperate stand against the Allies in France

## Frontline

### **14 Royal Australian Regiment**

In 70 years the RAR has served proudly in Vietnam, Rwanda and Afghanistan

### **16 Western Pacific deployments**

The regiment becomes embroiled in conflicts against communist forces in the region

### **18 Battle of Kapyong**

3 RAR joins UN forces in Korea and fights to save Seoul from communist occupation

### **20 RAR heroes and commanders**

The regiment has had knights, inspirational commanders and a VC recipient in its ranks

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Australia's involvement in the US-led conflict in Vietnam has left a controversial legacy

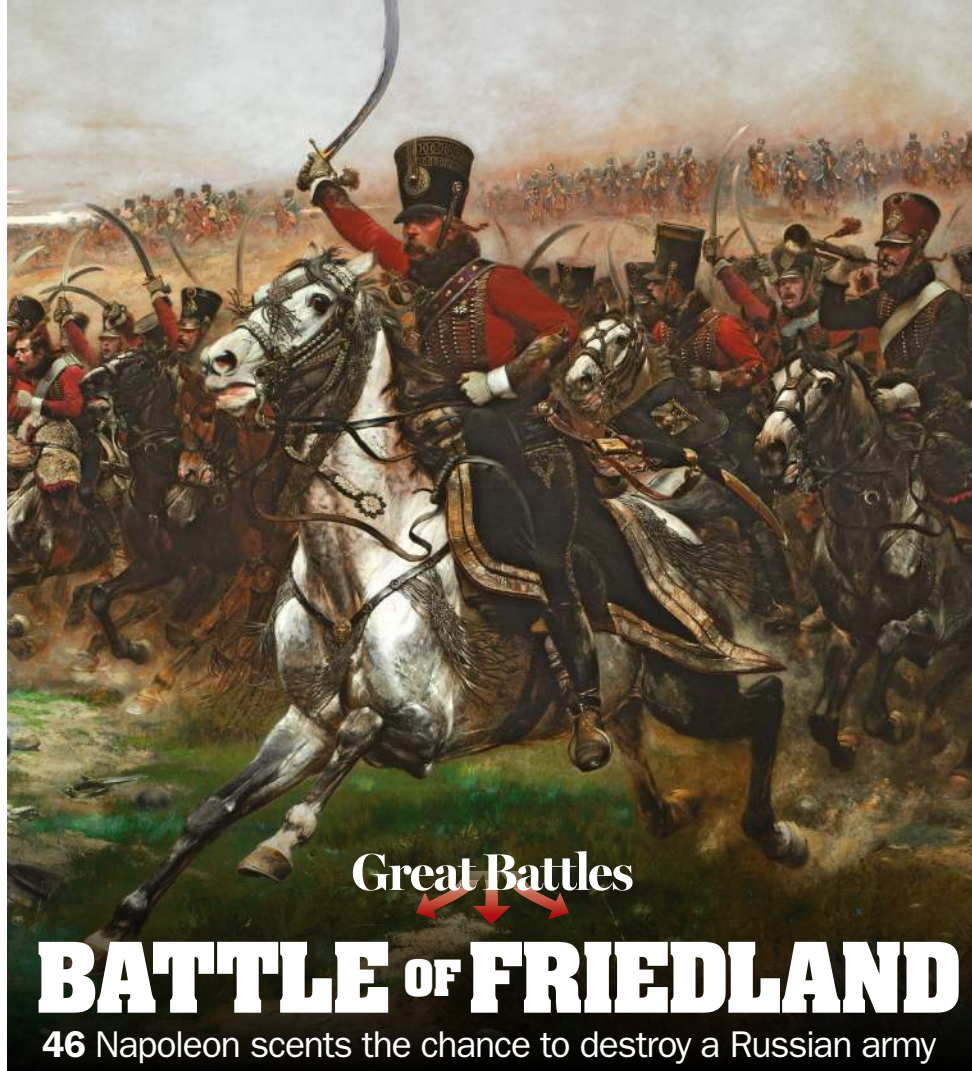
## Subscribe

**82** Never miss an issue, get **History Of War** before it's available in the shops and save a bundle while you're at it

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**54** Occupied Europe's largest underground force fights to free Poland from German control



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Napoleon seizes the perfect opportunity to destroy the Fourth Coalition

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The Polish Home Army was determined to end years of brutal German occupation

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Take a look inside the iconic fighter that destroyed the Luftwaffe

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Tate Britain's exhibition explores how art and society changed in the wake of WWI

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This New Zealander is the only combat soldier to win a Victoria Cross and Bar

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Win a copy of the *Haynes Flak 88 Manual* and explore the feared German gun

## 98 ARTEFACT OF WAR Roman ridge helmet

An ornate example of the later Roman Empire's military fashion

# P-51 MUSTANG

66 WWII's most effective fighter emerges from an unpromising start





# **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS** **TOXIC EXCHANGE**

*Taken: 23 October 1990*

French Foreign Legion soldiers conduct chemical warfare training in the Saudi desert, near Hafr al-Baten, prior to Operation Desert Storm. Coalition forces contesting the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq were prepared for potential chemical weapons to be used against them in combat. Iraq was known to have possessed such weapons and used them against its Kurdish population.







## **WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS**

### **ON THAT BOMBSHELL**

*Taken: 29 September 1943*

Members of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) wheel a torpedo, ready to be loaded into a submarine at Portsmouth harbour. The WRNS, the members of which are nicknamed 'Wrens', was formed in 1917 as the women's branch of the Royal Navy. Initially, its role was to take on auxiliary and support roles in the navy that had been vacated by men serving in combat.



## **WAR<sub>in</sub> FOCUS**

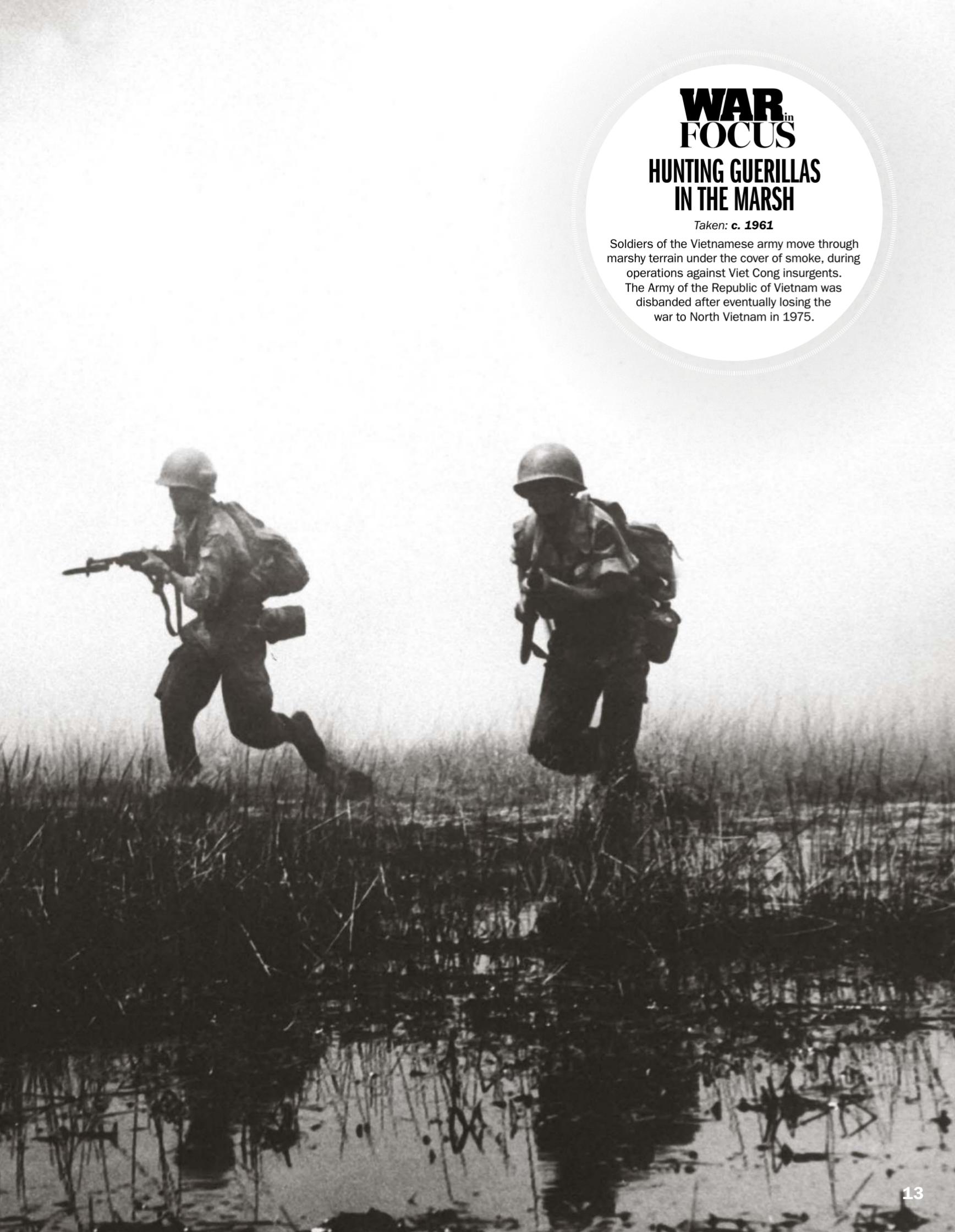
### **MITSUBISHI-SEA**

*Taken: November 2003*

A Japanese light bomber sits among the corals at the bottom of Chuuk Lagoon in Micronesia, where it has remained for over 70 years. The Mitsubishi G4M was a lightly armoured bomber deployed by the Imperial Japanese Navy, known by the Americans by the call sign 'Betty'. It is thought that hundreds of such wrecks lie on the ocean floor, most undiscovered to this day.







**WAR<sup>in</sup>  
FOCUS**  
**HUNTING GUERILLAS  
IN THE MARSH**

*Taken: c. 1961*

Soldiers of the Vietnamese army move through marshy terrain under the cover of smoke, during operations against Viet Cong insurgents. The Army of the Republic of Vietnam was disbanded after eventually losing the war to North Vietnam in 1975.

## TIMELINE OF THE...

# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

Known as the 'RAR', this infantry force is a senior regiment in the Australian Army and has seen extensive action in major wars during its 70-year history

**"THE REGIMENT RECEIVES  
BATTLE HONOURS AS WELL  
AS TWO FOREIGN CITATIONS  
- FROM THE UNITED STATES  
AND SOUTH VIETNAM"**

### MALAYA AND BORNEO

The RAR participates in the Malayan Emergency and then the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation in Borneo, fighting communist guerrillas and Indonesian troops. In both conflicts the regiment fights as part of the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve.

1948-49

### FORMATION

After World War II, the small regular Australian Army is established, and a new volunteer brigade is deployed to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan in 1948. The three battalions of this brigade are then designated as the 'Royal Australian Regiment' on 10 March 1949.

*Left: American General Robert L. Eichelberger inspects Australian troops at Kure, Japan at the British Commonwealth Occupation Force headquarters*



1950-53

### KOREAN WAR

Korea is the first real test of the RAR. All three of its battalions serve during the war and the Third Battalion (3 RAR) receives the US Presidential Unit Citation for halting a Chinese breakthrough at the Battle of Kapyong.

*Soldiers from C Company, 3 RAR watch for enemy troops in Korea while a village burns as a result of incendiary bullets, November 1950*



1955-66

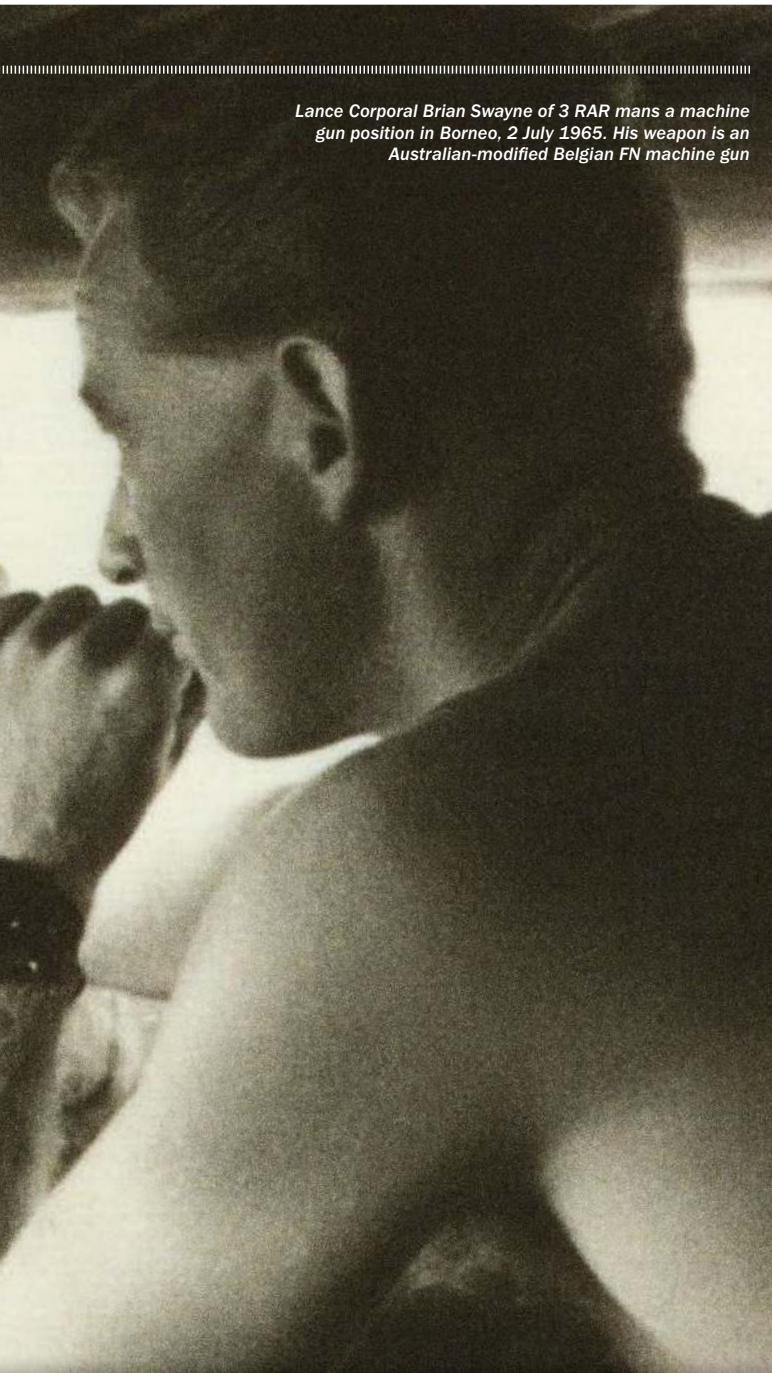
1965-71

### VIETNAM WAR

The RAR is expanded to nine battalions between 1964-66 and is twice deployed to fight in Vietnam as an ally of the USA. The regiment receives battle honours as well as two foreign citations - from the United States and South Vietnam.

*Soldiers of B Company, 7 RAR prepare to board US Army helicopters after an operation on 26 August 1967*





Lance Corporal Brian Swayne of 3 RAR mans a machine gun position in Borneo, 2 July 1965. His weapon is an Australian-modified Belgian FN machine gun



RAR soldiers board a US Marine Corps helicopter in Somalia while escorting bags of grain to the village of Maleel

## OPERATION SOLACE

1 RAR is deployed to Somalia as part of a UN task force to provide security for humanitarian relief during a period of famine and civil war in the country. The battalion is successful in reducing violence and interference with aid work.

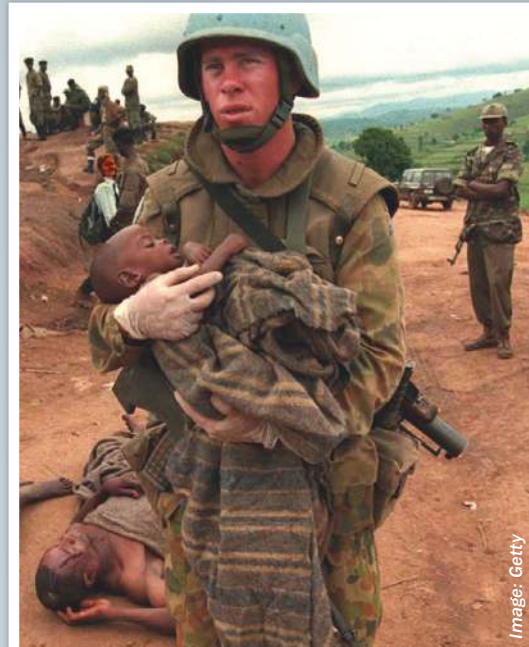


Image: Getty

## UN ASSISTANCE MISSION FOR RWANDA

Elements of the RAR are sent to Rwanda as UN peacekeepers. Members of 2 RAR witness the Kibeho massacre of 4,000 Hutu refugees by the Rwandan Patriotic Army in April 1995. During the incident Australian medics and infantrymen bravely attempt to assist refugees under fire.

An Australian UN soldier carries a Hutu orphan whose mother was killed during the Kibeho massacre. Four Medals for Gallantry were awarded to Australian peacekeepers who intervened to save lives

12 May-6 June 1968

## BATTLE OF CORAL-BALMORAL

Battalions 1 and 3 RAR fight in Australia's largest, most sustained battle of the Vietnam War. North Vietnamese troops engage elements of the First Australian Task Force in fierce actions around Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, east of Lai Khe. 25 Australians are killed compared to almost 300 North Vietnamese fatalities.

RAR soldiers defend a position at FSB Coral, May 1968. The RAR fights with other Australian units, such as artillery and armoured regiments



January-May 1993

1994-95

2003-present



Soldiers from Second Platoon, 3 (Para) RAR during a foot patrol in Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, 16 August 2008

## WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Australia joins the US-led coalition during the Iraq War and the RAR takes part in counter-insurgency operations. The regiment also participates in operations in Afghanistan from 2006, including the Battle of Derapet in August 2010. To date, 12 RAR personnel have been killed in Afghanistan.

# WESTERN PACIFIC DEPLOYMENTS

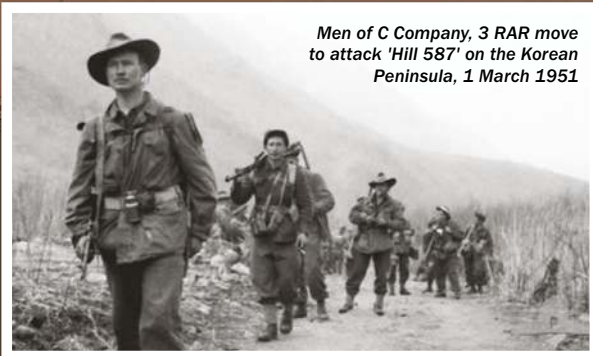
The regiment saw extensive action between 1950-72, from the freezing conflict in Korea to the jungles of Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam

## 1 BATTLE OF YONGJU

YONGJU, NORTH KOREA

21-22 October 1950

Yongju is the first action of Australian troops in Korea. 3 RAR launch a fierce surprise attack against North Korean snipers from their rear. The North Koreans retreat after three hours of fighting.



Men of C Company, 3 RAR move to attack 'Hill 587' on the Korean Peninsula, 1 March 1951

## 2 BATTLE OF CHONGJU

CHONGJU, NORTH KOREA

29-30 October 1950

3 RAR encounters a North Korean defensive line of 500-600 men. The battalion fights all night against infantry and tank attacks, killing 150 of the enemy while suffering nine fatalities.

## 3 BATTLE OF KAPYONG

KAPYONG RIVER, SOUTH KOREA

22-25 April 1951

Kapyong is the most important Australian battle during the Korean War. Chinese troops continually attack 3 RAR's hill positions, but the Australians contribute significantly to a UN victory that saves Seoul.

## 4 BATTLE OF MARYANG SAN

NEAR IMJIN RIVER, KOREA

3-8 October 1951

A combined 3 RAR-British operation attacks a series of hills, including Maryang San, near the Imjin River. In five days of heavy fighting, 3 RAR dislodges a numerically superior Chinese force from a position of great strength.

Below: Private Neville Ferguson of 3 RAR moves cautiously through the jungle with a Bren light machine gun, near the Sarawak-Kalimantan border in Borneo, 1965



## BATTLE OF SUOI BONG TRANG

TAN BINH, BINH DUONG PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

23-24 FEBRUARY 1966

## OPERATION CRIMP

CU CHI, BINH DUONG PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

8-14 JANUARY 1966

Left: An Australian soldier looks into a discovered Viet Cong tunnel during Operation Crimp, January 1966

## OPERATION HUMP

BIEN HOA, SOUTH VIETNAM

5-8 NOVEMBER 1965

## OPERATION BRIBIE

AP MY AN, PHUOC TUY PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

17-18 FEBRUARY 1967

## BATTLE OF SUOI CHAU PHA

PHUOC TUY PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

6 AUGUST 1967

## BATTLE OF NUI LE

PHUOC TUY PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

21 SEPTEMBER 1971

## BATTLE OF GANG TOI

GANG TOI HILLS, DONG NAI PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

8 NOVEMBER 1965

## OPERATION COBURG

TRANG BOM, DONG NAI PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

24 JANUARY-1 MARCH 1968

## BATTLE OF LONG KHANH

DONG NAI PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

6-7 JUNE 1971

## MALAYAN EMERGENCY

MALAY PENINSULA

1955-64

## BATTLE OF SUNGEI KOEMBA

SUNGEI KOEMBA RIVER, INDONESIA

27 MAY-12 JUNE 1965

## BATTLE OF BABANG

BABANG, KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA

12 JULY 1965

## BATTLE OF KINDAU

KINDAU, KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA

15 JUNE 1965

## OPERATION CLARET

SARAWAK AND SABAH, EAST MALAYSIA AND KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA

JULY 1964-JULY 1966



**BATTLE OF PAKCHON**  
PAKCHON, NORTH KOREA  
5 NOVEMBER 1950

Above: C Company, 3 RAR pictured with American tanks while engaging the enemy, November 1950



**BATTLE OF THE SAMICHON RIVER**  
JAMESTOWN LINE, SAMICHON RIVER, KOREA  
24-26 JULY 1953

A soldier from 9 RAR aims his rifle down a Viet Cong underground bunker during Operation Goodwood, 22 January 1969

**6 BATTLE OF CORAL-BALMORAL**

LAI KHE, BINH DUONG PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

12 May-6 June 1968

1 and 3 RAR defend fire support bases (FSB) in a series of engagements 40 kilometres (25 miles) northeast of Saigon. 25 Australians are killed, along with 99 wounded, during attacks on FSBs Coral and Balmoral, but the result is a significant victory.



**7 BATTLE OF HAT DICH**

HAT DICH, SOUTH VIETNAM

3 December 1968-19 February 1969

1, 4 and 9 RAR lead a series of allied actions against suspected North Vietnamese bases. Codenamed 'Operation Goodwood', the Australians conduct sustained patrolling over 78 days and force the North Vietnamese to abandon their bases in the Hat Dich area.

**8 BATTLE OF BINH BA**

BINH BA, PHUOC TUY PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

6-8 June 1969

5 RAR is deployed to remove North Vietnamese forces from Binh Ba. With armoured support, the Australians, unusually, participate in intense house-to-house fighting over two days. 5 RAR suffers only one fatality compared with 107-126 North Vietnamese casualties.

**"WITH ARMoured SUPPORT, THE AUSTRALIANS, UNUSUALLY, PARTICIPATE IN INTENSE HOUSE-TO-HOUSE FIGHTING OVER TWO DAYS. 5 RAR SUFFERS ONLY ONE FATALITY COMPARED WITH 107-126 NORTH VIETNAMESE CASUALTIES"**

**5 BATTLE OF LONG TAN**

LONG TAN, PHUOC TUY PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM

8 August 1966

105 men of 6 RAR (along with three New Zealand soldiers) are surrounded by 1,500-2,500 North Vietnamese troops. The Anzacs inflict hundreds of casualties over three hours, and the battle becomes the defining moment for Australia during the Vietnam War.



Right: The aftermath of the fighting at Binh Ba. The battle was characterised by brutal house-to-house fighting



Left: Australian signallers at Long Tan waiting to return to base, August 1966

# FAMOUS BATTLE KAPYONG 1951

This intense battle was the most significant of the Korean War for the RAR, whose Third Battalion helped save Seoul from communist occupation

**3** RAR had landed in South Korea at Pusan in September 1950 as part of the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade. The brigade was serving in a UN force to restore peace on the Korean Peninsula, and 3 RAR immediately began participating in the northern advance to the Yalu River.

The battalion spent much of the winter of 1950-51 fighting in harsh, hilly terrain against the Chinese and North Koreans in battles at Yongju, Kujin and Chongju. By the spring of 1951 the Chinese had withdrawn to the 38th Parallel but were actually luring the UN into a vulnerable position in order to launch a major counterattack. This came on 22 April

1951 when the Chinese began their 'Spring Offensive' and heavily defeated the South Korean Sixth Division. The Chinese objective was to capture Seoul, and the South Koreans had been overrun defending a major approach route down the valley of the Kapyong River.

The 27th British Commonwealth Brigade now had to occupy hastily assembled defensive positions approximately 20 kilometres (12 miles) south of the 38th Parallel on 23 April. 3 RAR and 2 PPCLI (Second Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry) were assigned forward hilltop positions on either side of the seven-kilometre (four-mile) wide Kapyong valley. Other troops included the British Middlesex

Regiment, which was held in reserve, and fire support units including American tanks and New Zealand artillery. Facing them in superior numbers were 6,000 Chinese soldiers.

## The Australians hold firm

3 RAR was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Ferguson, an experienced WWII veteran who had taken over command of the battalion after his predecessor, Charles Green, had been killed at the Battle of Chongju. Over the next two days he would lead 3 RAR in the most testing circumstances, and it was the Australians who bore the brunt of the initial fighting.

During the early evening of 23 April, retreating South Koreans passed through

*Australian soldiers riding a tank in North Korea, November 1950. 17,000 Australians served with the UN during the Korean War, and hundreds were decorated for their bravery*

**"THE BATTALION SPENT MUCH OF THE WINTER OF 1950-51 FIGHTING IN HARSH, HILLY TERRAIN"**



Image: Getty

# 3 RAR

## 'OLD FAITHFUL'

THIS INFANTRY UNIT IS ONE OF THE OLDEST AND MOST DISTINGUISHED BATTALIONS IN THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

Initially formed as one of three original battalions in the Royal Australian Regiment, 3 RAR began its life as the 67th Battalion in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan in 1945. The battalion's proud service record includes deployments to Japan, Korea, Malaya, Borneo, South Vietnam, East Timor, the Solomon Islands, Iraq and Afghanistan.

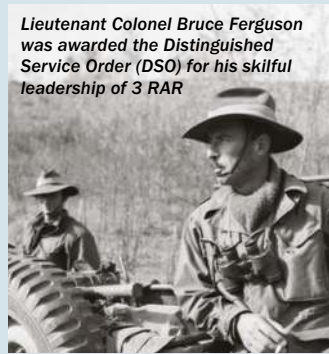
Of these deployments, 3 RAR has received six battle honours, for actions at Yongju, Chongju, Uijeongbu, Kapyong, Maryang San and Coral-Balmoral. The majority of these battles were fought during the Korean War, and 3 RAR has the distinction of being the only battalion in the regiment to have received a US Presidential Unit Citation.

The battalion's most recent deployment was serving in Afghanistan in 2012 to train the Fourth Brigade, 205th Corps in the Afghan National Army. 3 RAR is universally nicknamed within the regiment as 'Old Faithful' for its doggedly loyal fighting spirit.

Lieutenant Tyson Yew leads his 3 RAR platoon through the Afghan town of Tarin Kowt as part of the International Security Assistance Force, 16 August 2008



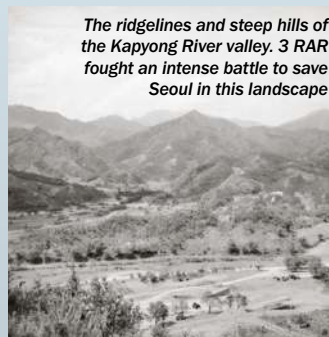
A soldier of C Company, 3 RAR leans against the wall of a captured Chinese trench, April 1951



Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Ferguson was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his skilful leadership of 3 RAR



Chinese troops pursue soldiers of the South Korean Sixth Division before the Battle of Kapyong



The ridgelines and steep hills of the Kapyong River valley. 3 RAR fought an intense battle to save Seoul in this landscape



Above: US General James Van Fleet inspects soldiers of 3 RAR after awarding the Presidential Unit Citation to the battalion, December 1951



Above: Chinese POWs captured by B Company, 3 RAR, 24 April 1951. B Company engaged in hand-to-hand fighting at Kapyong

the Commonwealth positions, but they were intermingled with Chinese troops. The platoon of American tanks that was supporting 3 RAR was overrun and the brigade was too thinly spread along the Kapyong valley, which meant that individual battalions largely fought alone.

The Australians were repeatedly attacked by the Chinese throughout the night of 23-24 April. The Chinese would assault in waves with such tenacity that they frequently advanced over their own dead and wounded. Units of 3 RAR fought a dogged defence against these attacks, particularly A and B Companies. A Company, which was commanded by Major Bernard O'Dowd, was infiltrated by the Chinese at dawn, but the Australians ejected them with a counterattack. Meanwhile B Company was engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with grenades and bayonets, who were occupying old bunkers.

At this stage O'Dowd radioed for assistance from the US First Marine Division, but the Americans believed that 3 RAR had been wiped out. O'Dowd famously replied, "I've got news for you, we are still here and we are staying here."

### Withdrawal to victory

The Canadians, who had also faced similar attacks, had already been cut off and were resupplied by airdrop. The Australians kept fighting throughout 24 April, but they were forced to withdraw from their ridge on Hill 504 to rejoin the brigade. The Canadians held their position, and eventually the Chinese attacks stopped.

**"THE CHINESE WOULD ATTACK IN WAVES WITH SUCH TENACITY THAT THEY FREQUENTLY ADVANCED OVER THEIR OWN DEAD AND WOUNDED"**

By 25 April the road through to the Canadians had been cleared, and American units relieved 2 PPCLI. Thanks to 3 RAR and the Canadians, the Chinese advance had been halted, and by coincidence the UN victory was secured on Anzac Day.

The statistics of the Battle of Kapyong were staggering: 32 Australians and ten Canadians had been killed, but the Chinese had suffered casualties of at least 2,000 – a casualty rate of approximately one in three. The Battle of Kapyong stalled the Chinese Spring Offensive, and by late May UN forces had advanced back to the 38th Parallel, a line that still marks the North-South Korean border today.

For his leadership of 3 RAR during the battle, Bruce Ferguson was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, while the battalion, as well as the Canadians, received the US Presidential Unit Citation from President Harry S. Truman for their bravery at Kapyong.



# RAR HEROES AND COMMANDERS

The Royal Australian Regiment's highly professional personnel have included courageous troops, knights and a Victoria Cross recipient

## DANIEL KEIGHRAN

THE FIRST MEMBER OF THE RAR TO BE AWARDED THE VC  
1983- CORPORAL

Although Mark Donaldson and Benjamin Roberts-Smith are both former RAR personnel who have subsequently won the Victoria Cross, Daniel Keighran is the first VC recipient to receive the award while serving in the regiment.

Keighran joined the Australian Army on 5 December 2000 and was posted to 6 RAR after his initial training. Between 2001-06 Keighran was deployed to Malaysia, Timor-Leste and Iraq, before eventually serving in Afghanistan between 2007-10.

It was during his second Afghanistan deployment that Keighran (by then a corporal) was awarded the Victoria Cross. On 24 August 2010 Keighran was part of a combined Afghan-Australian fighting patrol that engaged a numerically superior force of Taliban insurgents, in an encounter that later became known as the 'Battle of Derapet'.

The patrol came under attack from heavy machine gun and small arms fire, but Keighran moved forward and deliberately drew enemy attention onto himself to help identify targets. Keighran continually moved around an exposed ridge, leading his team and directing fire while constantly under attack. At one point, Keighran moved 100 metres (109 yards) over the ridge and exposed his position four times, drawing attention away from a medical team that was treating an Australian casualty. During the battle it was noted that Keighran repeatedly fought with "exceptional courage" and a "complete disregard for his own safety." The fight at Derapet ended as an Afghan-Australian victory, with only one Australian fatality compared to at least 30 Taliban dead.

Keighran's VC citation concluded that, "His valour is in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army", and he was subsequently invested with the award in Canberra on 1 November 2012 for "the most conspicuous acts of gallantry and extreme devotion to duty in action in circumstances of great peril at Derapet". Keighran continues to serve in the Australian Army Reserves.

*Keighran being saluted by General David Hurley after receiving the Victoria Cross in 2012*



Following his investiture of the Victoria Cross for Australia, Keighran met Queen Elizabeth II and the Prince of Wales at formal meetings and events in the United Kingdom

## SIR FRANK HASSETT

THE INSPIRATIONAL OFFICER  
WHO LED 3 RAR TO VICTORY AT  
THE BATTLE OF MARYANG SAN  
1918-2008 GENERAL

Hassett was accepted into the Royal Military College in Sydney at the age of 16 and was a promising officer. He fought in North Africa during WWII and became the youngest army officer to become a lieutenant colonel, at the age of 23. By the early 1950s Hassett was working as a staff officer in Australia, but his actions during the Korean War would make his reputation.

In March 1951 Hassett joined the RAR and led the First and Third Battalions. He was sent to Korea while commanding 3 RAR and led it during the Battle of Maryang San, between 3-8 October 1951.

This dramatic UN victory saw Hassett exposing himself to artillery, mortar and small arms fire while he led 3 RAR against numerically superior Chinese positions on Hill 355. His men considered him to be an inspirational leader, and he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his bravery. Hassett later became the chief of the Defence Force staff and was knighted in 1976.



Hassett pictured in Korea, July 1951. After he retired in 1977 Hassett was appointed as the colonel commandant of the Royal Australian Regiment

Image: Getty

**HARRY SMITH**

THE COURAGEOUS VICTOR OF THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN  
1933- LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Smith joined the Australian Army as a private and graduated as a second lieutenant from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, Victoria, in December 1952. He joined 2 RAR and first saw active service during the Malayan Emergency between 1955-57. By the mid-1960s Smith had been promoted to major and was the commanding officer of D Company, 6 RAR between June 1966-June 1967 during the Vietnam War.

On 18 August 1966 D Company and a handful of New Zealand artillerymen encountered a regimental-sized North Vietnamese force that was preparing to advance on the Australians' base. With only 108 men, Smith managed to organise his forces and offer a fierce defence during a monsoon while waiting for reinforcements, against approximately 1,500-2,500 North Vietnamese soldiers. Over 200 North Vietnamese were killed compared to 18 Australians. Smith was awarded the Military Cross for his leadership. In 2008 Smith's MC was upgraded to the Star of Gallantry – second only to the VC in the Australian honours system.

*Left: Major Harry Smith receiving his Military Cross from Brigadier O.D. Jackson in 1967*

**CHARLES GREEN**

THE FIRST RAR BATTALION COMMANDER  
TO BE KILLED IN ACTION  
1919-50 LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Green's initial military career was as a militiaman in New South Wales before he joined the Australian Imperial Force in 1939 as an officer. He fought in Greece and the Aitape-Wewak campaign during WWII and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

After demobilisation in November Green returned to civilian life, but rejoined the Australian armed forces in 1949 and was given command of 3 RAR in September 1950. The battalion was moved to South Korea the following month, with 3 RAR advancing northwards and contributing to

*A fellow officer said of Green that, "Troops would follow Charlie anywhere because he understood them and they understood he was fair dinkum"*



the UN victory at Yongju between 21-22 October 1950. The battalion was in action again days later at the Battle of Chongju. The Australians repulsed a North Korean counterattack and occupied positions on a ridge overlooking a river.

On 30 October an enemy shell exploded near Green's tent and severely wounded him in the abdomen. When he died two days later it was said that his death "cast a pall of gloom over his battalion". Nevertheless, the fighting at Chongju ended in a UN victory and the USA posthumously awarded Green the Silver Star.

**SIR PHILLIP BENNETT**

THE NOTABLE OFFICER WHO SERVED WITH THE RAR IN KOREA AND VIETNAM  
1928- GENERAL

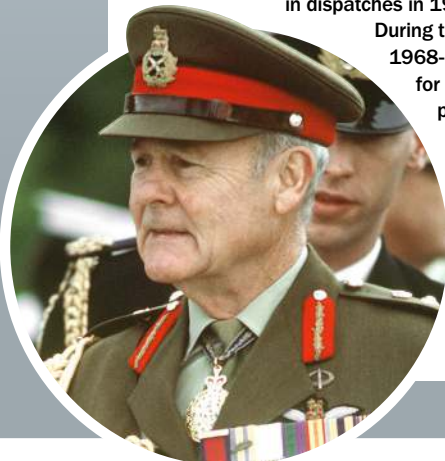
Born in Perth, Western Australia, Bennett was commissioned as a lieutenant in December 1948 and was one of the first officers to join the RAR with the Allied Occupation Force in Japan in 1949.

Bennett then saw extensive action with 3 RAR during the Korean War, where he was wounded in action on 14 October 1950. He remained on duty and was mentioned in dispatches in 1951, and remained in Korea until the end of the war.

During the Vietnam War, Bennett commanded 1 RAR between 1968-69 and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his command of the battalion. This was an intense period for 1 RAR that included the battles of Coral-Balmoral and Hat Dich.

Bennett went on to become the chief of the Defence Force, was knighted in 1983 and was appointed as the governor of Tasmania in 1987.

*Bennett is the inaugural National Patron of the Royal Australian Regiment Association and also served as the inaugural chairman of the Australian War Memorial Foundation*



*Kelly helped to plan Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq, while acting as the first director of the Combined Planning Group in the US Central Command*

**MARK KELLY**

THE CURRENT COLONEL COMMANDANT OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT 1956- MAJOR GENERAL

Queen Elizabeth II and Sir Peter Cosgrove, the governor-general of Australia, are the symbolic heads of the RAR as colonel-in-chief and colonel of the regiment respectively. Nevertheless, the highest practical title of colonel commandant belongs to Major General Mark Kelly, who is the present commander of the regiment.

In the Australian Army the colonel commandant has a quasi-honorary role to act as an advocate for the troops' interests. Kelly is required to visit troops wherever the regiment is deployed and he has an extensive history with the RAR.

Kelly joined 5/7 RAR in the 1970s and was first deployed to Rhodesia with the Commonwealth Monitoring Force between 1979-80. He went on to command 1 RAR and served as chief of staff for the International Force in East Timor (1999-2000) and had command of all Australian forces in Afghanistan and the Middle East in 2009. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his "distinguished leadership, exceptional professionalism and unwavering dedication"

**"IN THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY THE COLONEL COMMANDANT HAS A QUASI-HONORARY ROLE TO ACT AS AN ADVOCATE FOR THE TROOPS' INTERESTS"**

# RAR IN VIETNAM

The regiment was arguably the most significant military component of Australia's involvement in the deeply controversial conflict

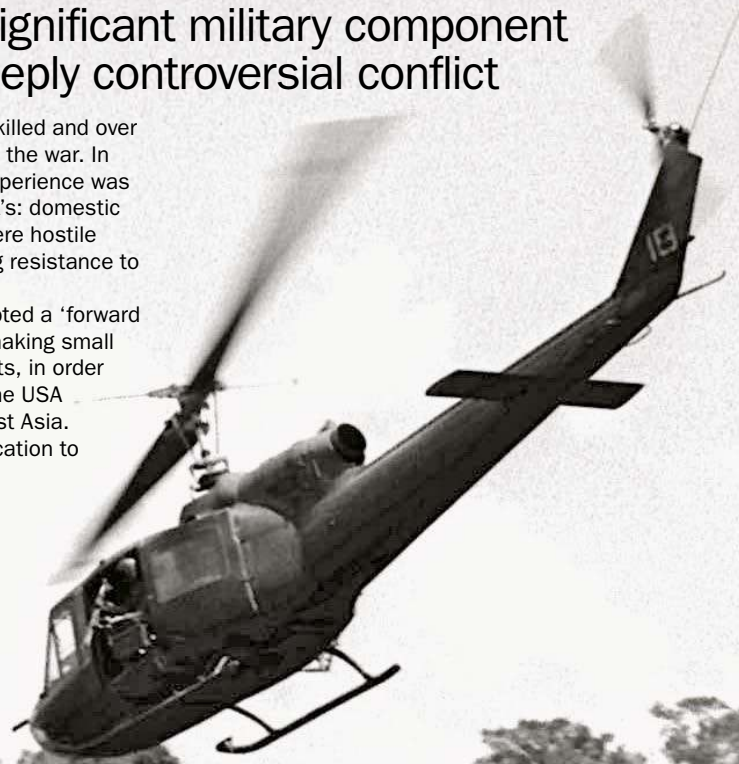
**F**or the United States, the Vietnam War was a humiliating disaster that broke its military aura of invincibility and cost many lives. It is often assumed that the USA fought alone to support South Vietnam against North Vietnamese forces, but the Americans received significant support from regional allies, including Australia and New Zealand.

The Australian contribution was significant, and between 1962-73 almost 60,000 members of its armed forces served in Vietnam, which included ground troops as well as air and naval

personnel. 521 Australians were killed and over 3,000 more were wounded during the war. In many ways Australia's Vietnam experience was a reflective microcosm of the USA's: domestic opposition was huge and there were hostile protests, bitter politics and strong resistance to draft conscription.

Since WWII, Australia had adopted a 'forward defence' strategy that aimed at making small and effective military commitments, in order to keep Britain and increasingly the USA committed to security in Southeast Asia. Australia had already shown dedication to

**"IN MANY WAYS AUSTRALIA'S VIETNAM EXPERIENCE WAS A REFLECTIVE MICROCOSM OF THE USA'S"**



Soldiers of 1 RAR step ashore at Vung Tau to spearhead Australia's ground troop commitment in Vietnam, 8 June 1965

Above: A protest march against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, May 1970. Hundreds of thousands of people protested throughout Australia during the late 1960s and early 1970s

this policy by deploying troops (including large numbers of the RAR) to wars in Korea, Malaya and Borneo in order to prevent communist insurgencies from undermining regional stability. In this sense, Australian politicians saw the situation in Vietnam as similar to previous conflicts, but the war would leave a bitter legacy.

### A substantial deployment

Australian military advisors first arrived in Vietnam in 1962 as part of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) and transport aircraft from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) followed in 1964. In early 1965 the USA began a major escalation of the war and asked for support from allies, including Australia. 200,000 American troops were now fighting in Vietnam, and the Australian government followed suit by despatching 1 RAR in June 1965 to serve alongside the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in Bien Hoa province.

The deployment of 1 RAR was only the beginning of a relatively large Australian presence in Vietnam. In March 1966 the First Australian Task Force (which included New Zealand units) of two battalions and support services arrived in Phuoc Tuy province to replace 1 RAR. This force was able to

perform its own independent operations and controversially included conscripts. All nine battalions of the RAR eventually served in this task force before it was withdrawn in 1971. At its height there were 8,500 troops serving in it.

Away from the ground troops, RAAF jet bombers joined US patrols over the North Vietnamese coast, and the Royal Australian Navy also provided a diving team and helicopters to assist the US Army.

The arrival of the task force inevitably exposed Australian troops to heavy combat, and the RAR in particular fought intense battles such as Long Tan, Coral-Balmoral, Hat Dich and Binh Ba. The regiment held its own in these battles and won impressive tactical victories, but ultimately the tide of the war was against them. In 1968 North Vietnamese forces launched the Tet Offensive, and although it was militarily defeated the Americans began to question if a decisive victory was actually possible in Vietnam. It was an opinion that many were already vocalising in Australia.

### Protests and withdrawal

Australian protests against the war mirrored their American counterparts. Opposition was initially divided between moderates and radicals, but from 1969 the protests became

more unified. A campaign called "Don't Register" aimed to dissuade young men from registering for conscription, and the 'Moratorium' antiwar movement held major demonstrations. In May 1970 approximately 70,000-100,000 people peacefully occupied Melbourne during a Moratorium march, and there were similar protests throughout Australia. A large factor in these protests was the escalation of the war into Cambodia, but by 1970 Australian involvement in Vietnam was already ending.

RAR battalions began to be withdrawn from Vietnam in November 1970 and were not replaced, with the last departing a year later. Military advisors remained until December 1972. The governor-general finally proclaimed the end of Australia's participation in the war in January 1973.

Vietnam caused the most serious dissent in Australia since the conscription referendums of WWI, with many protestors, conscientious objectors and draft resisters being fined or jailed. Returning soldiers sometimes encountered hostility and many suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Like in America, the Vietnam War was a hard experience for Australia, with a legacy that remains divisive today.

*Australian soldiers on the ground in Vietnam, 1965. The relatively large Australian representation proved highly contentious*

**"THE ARRIVAL OF THE TASK FORCE INEVITABLY EXPOSED AUSTRALIAN TROOPS TO HEAVY COMBAT, AND THE RAR IN PARTICULAR FOUGHT INTENSE BATTLES"**



Images: Getty

# SS PANZERS THE LAST

The panzer and panzergrenadier divisions of the Waffen-SS responded ferociously to the Allied landings in Normandy, but suffered tremendous losses

**A**llied deception, tactical differences of opinion among top field commanders and Hitler's intransigence combined in June 1944. It proved to delay the elite Waffen-SS panzer and panzergrenadier divisions in confronting the Allies during the landings in Normandy and in the campaign that followed. But once committed, these divisions were true to their reputation as fierce, fanatical combat formations dedicated to Nazi ideology and willing to die for the führer.

And die they did, by the thousands under a hail of artillery, air attacks, naval gunfire and the relentless thrusts of Allied ground troops. Nevertheless, the Waffen-SS exacted a heavy toll in lives and equipment while sacrificing its strength to halt the enemy in Normandy.

Highly motivated and led by dedicated veteran officers, the SS soldiers were deployed

with the best weaponry available. From early June to late August 1944, six divisions – First SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, Second SS Panzer Division Das Reich, Ninth SS Panzer Division Hohenstaufen, Tenth SS Panzer Division Frundsberg, 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend and 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division Götz von Berlichingen – were deployed in Normandy, and were later joined by the 101st and 102nd SS Heavy Panzer Battalions in the death struggle.

These divisions were equipped with tanks that had proven superior to their Allied opposition. The 29-ton PzKpfw. IV medium tank – the workhorse of the German formations – mounted a 75mm cannon, while the 45-ton PzKpfw. V Panther – arguably the best all-around tank of the war – was outfitted with the long-barrelled, high-velocity 75mm cannon, and the 56-ton PzKpfw. VI Tiger mounted the

lethal 88mm high-velocity cannon. These weapons generally possessed greater range than the guns of Allied tanks, while their armour protection provided enhanced survivability.

Infantrymen were equipped with the reliable Mauser K98k bolt-action rifle, squad-level automatic weapons such as the MP-38 and MP-40 sub-machine guns, and the superb MG-34 and MG-42 machine guns – reliable weapons with rates of fire well above those of any weapon in the Allied inventory.

The SS troops and German army in Normandy held an advantage: in defensive combat they could utilise the hedgerow country, or bocage – high, centuries-old earthen mounds that divided fields and pastures in peacetime, but also provided excellent concealment and turned every country lane into a killing ground.

Still, the SS formations and others throughout France were restricted in their movement

# T STAND

WORDS MICHAEL E. HASKEW



during the critical early phase of the battle for Normandy. Commanders were prohibited from engaging the enemy at full strength without permission from Hitler, who slept until 10am on the morning of 6 June and refused to allow the immediately available armoured reserve, the 12th SS Panzer Hitlerjugend and the army's Panzer Lehr divisions, to move forward until late in the afternoon. Only the tanks of the veteran 21st Panzer Division counterattacked in any strength on D-Day, driving through a gap between two of the British invasion beaches to the English Channel coast, before it was compelled to retire.

As precious time evaporated, the opportunity to destroy the Allied foothold in Normandy faded as well. Rather than mounting a concerted armoured counterattack, the Germans were forced to commit their tanks piecemeal in the face of growing Allied



## WORLD OF TANKS

World of Tanks first appeared on PC in 2010 and to date has recruited 160 million registered players, becoming one of the most popular games in the world. The new World of Tanks Update 1.0 is now available in Europe and North America, unleashing Wargaming's high-end Core graphics engine exclusively for PC players. This huge update to the game takes tank combat to new heights with improved visuals, reworked battlefields, and more.

For more information visit [worldoftanks.eu](http://worldoftanks.eu)

**"THESE DIVISIONS WERE TRUE TO THEIR REPUTATION AS FIERCE, FANATICAL COMBAT FORMATIONS DEDICATED TO NAZI IDEOLOGY AND WILLING TO DIE FOR THE FÜHRER. AND DIE THEY DID"**

strength, blunting the spearheads of British General Bernard Montgomery's attempts to capture Caen. The city rested 11 kilometres (seven miles) from the coast and dominated an open plateau that provided favourable terrain for tank formations all the way to Paris. Although Caen was a British D-Day objective, their failure to capture the city precipitated a brutal, month-long battle. The panzers were further stretched to contain the American drive, under General Omar Bradley, to capture the town of Carentan to the west and then strike across the neck of the Cotentin Peninsula and isolate the port of Cherbourg.

The Second SS Panzer Division Das Reich was ordered north from Toulouse in southern France, but its movement was seriously hampered by the French Resistance, which sabotaged rail lines and harassed the division the entire way. Allied fighter-bombers hit the division hard, taking a heavy toll on men and armoured vehicles, delaying the arrival of Das Reich in Normandy until 12 June. The 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division Götz von Berlichingen experienced similar delays before arriving at Carentan on 11 June, and the First SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler was held north of the Seine River to counter another potential landing in the Pas de Calais. The Leibstandarte was not ordered to Normandy until late June, with elements arriving on the night of the 27th, while the bulk of the division did not reach the combat zone until the first week of July.

At 5pm on 6 June, half a day after the Allied landings in Normandy had commenced, the 12th SS was set in motion, its 20,540 troops aboard 229 tanks, 658 halftracks and self-propelled assault guns and roughly 2,000 trucks. Allied air attacks, traffic jams and streams of refugees slowed its progress during a 105-kilometre (65-mile) advance from Lisieux. By nightfall only about 30 per cent of its strength had reached the marshalling area southwest of Caen. Morale remained high and the Hitlerjugend Division was spoiling for a fight. Raised in 1943 from young men of the Hitler Youth born in the first half of 1926, the division had not yet seen battle.

The vanguard of the 12th SS, the 25th Panzergrenadier Regiment under Colonel Kurt

'Panzer' Meyer, came up on the left of 21st Panzer, facing the Canadian Third Division. Meyer commanded a battalion of PzKpfw. IV tanks and three infantry battalions. He climbed to the top of a tower at the Abbey of Ardenne on the western outskirts of Caen and peered through his field glasses. Canadian tanks and infantry were moving towards Carpiquet airfield. He smiled and announced, "Little fish! We'll throw them back into the sea in the morning."

Around 10am on 7 June, Meyer was satisfied with his disposition. As the Canadian tanks filed past, he waited until they topped a ridgeline south of Franqueville, barely 180 metres (200 yards) from his hidden tanks, anti-tank guns and panzergrenadiers. Then he gave the order to fire. One German soldier remembered, "The lead enemy tanks began smoking, and I saw how the crews bailed out. Other tanks exploded in pieces in the air. A panzer Mark IV suddenly stopped, burning, tongues of flame shooting out of the turret."

The sudden ferocity of the Hitlerjugend ambush took the Canadians by surprise, driving them back three kilometres (two miles) before Allied artillery and naval gunfire disrupted the drive. Finding the range, the big guns destroyed at least half a dozen German tanks, while Canadian anti-tank guns barked as the Third Division regrouped around the town of Buron. One German tank erupted in flames, and a horrified eyewitness recalled, "The shell tore off the tank commander's leg, SS Scharführer Esser, but I heard he got out of the turret later. Phosphorous shells caused the tank to instantly burst into flames all over. I was helpless. I made my way back with third-degree burns, towards our grenadiers following up. They recoiled from me on sight as if they had seen a ghoul."

Although rebuffed, the young SS soldiers had succeeded in blunting the Canadian drive.

During their baptism of fire, they had destroyed at least 28 enemy tanks. When the division commander was killed by Allied naval gunfire, Meyer was soon elevated to lead the entire 12th SS Panzer Division.

The following day, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, commander of German Army Group B, organised a major armoured attack to rupture the Allied lodgement, including the 12th SS and the army's 21st Panzer and Panzer Lehr Divisions. The attack was thwarted by an inadequate command structure, devastating naval gunfire and the surprise of a coincidentally timed British armoured thrust. Convinced that the opportunity to throw the Allies into the English Channel had passed, Rommel transitioned to a defensive posture, deploying nearly 600 tanks, including those of the 12th SS, on a front from Caen to Caumont in the east, while fewer than 100 were positioned near the western invasion beachhead. The 12th SS anchored positions north and west of Caen. An anti-aircraft battery and the First Battalion, 26th Panzergrenadier Regiment and 15 tanks were tasked with holding Carpiquet airfield.

Seizing the initiative, Montgomery launched an attack with his veteran Seventh Armoured Division, the famed 'Desert Rats' of the North Africa campaign. He was intent on driving the Germans out of Caen and bringing the weight of the enemy armour onto his own front, in order to assist the Americans further west in their efforts to break out of the beachhead and strike across open country. Montgomery focused on Hill 112, a commanding position just south of Carpiquet. On 12-13 June the British spearhead raced around the flank of 21st Panzer and into the hamlet of Villers-Bocage, threatening the rear of Panzer Lehr.

Suddenly, on the morning of the 13th a stark reversal sent the British reeling. The

**"DURING THEIR BAPTISM OF FIRE, THEY HAD DESTROYED AT LEAST 28 ENEMY TANKS"**

*A Tiger tank crew of the First SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte pauses during training in the spring of 1944*

*Right: Two young panzergrenadiers of the 12th SS Hitlerjugend show the strain of war on their faces near the French town of Tilly-sur-Seulles*



# SS DEFENDERS

DIVISIONS TRAVELLED FROM ACROSS FRANCE AND BEYOND TO OPPOSE THE ALLIED INVASION



## 12TH SS PANZER DIVISION HITLERJUGEND

**21,300 troops; 229 tanks and self-propelled assault guns**

In early 1943 the nucleus of the 12th SS Panzer Division was formed around a cadre from the First SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. The emphasis was on recruiting young men of the Hitler Youth. After months of training in Belgium, the division was transferred to the vicinity of Caen in Normandy in the spring of 1944. Although it had yet to see actual combat, the division soon gained a reputation for brutality. After participating in the Ardennes Offensive and fighting in Hungary, it surrendered in Austria.



## 17TH SS PANZERGRENADIER DIVISION GOTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

**17,321 troops; 88 tanks and self-propelled assault guns**

When it was transferred to Normandy in June 1944, the 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division was not yet fully combat ready. Formed in France in the autumn of 1943, its transport was inadequate, and much of its armour consisted of Sturmgeschütz assault guns rather than PzKpfw. IV tanks. After retreating from Normandy to Metz in August 1944, the division fought at the Moselle River in France, in defence of Metz, and in Operation Nordwind in Alsace-Lorraine in early 1945. It surrendered in Germany on 6 May.



## FIRST SS PANZER DIVISION LEIBSTANDARTE ADOLF HITLER

**19,000 troops; 168 tanks, self-propelled assault guns and other armoured vehicles**

Originally formed in the 1920s as Hitler's personal bodyguard, the Leibstandarte grew to regimental and divisional strength with the Waffen-SS, participating in major campaigns on three fronts, including the invasions of Poland, France and the Low Countries, Operation Barbarossa, the occupation of Greece, the fighting in Italy and Normandy, the Ardennes Offensive and the defence of Berlin. One of the most experienced Waffen-SS divisions, the Leibstandarte surrendered to US forces at Steyr, Austria, on 8 May 1945.

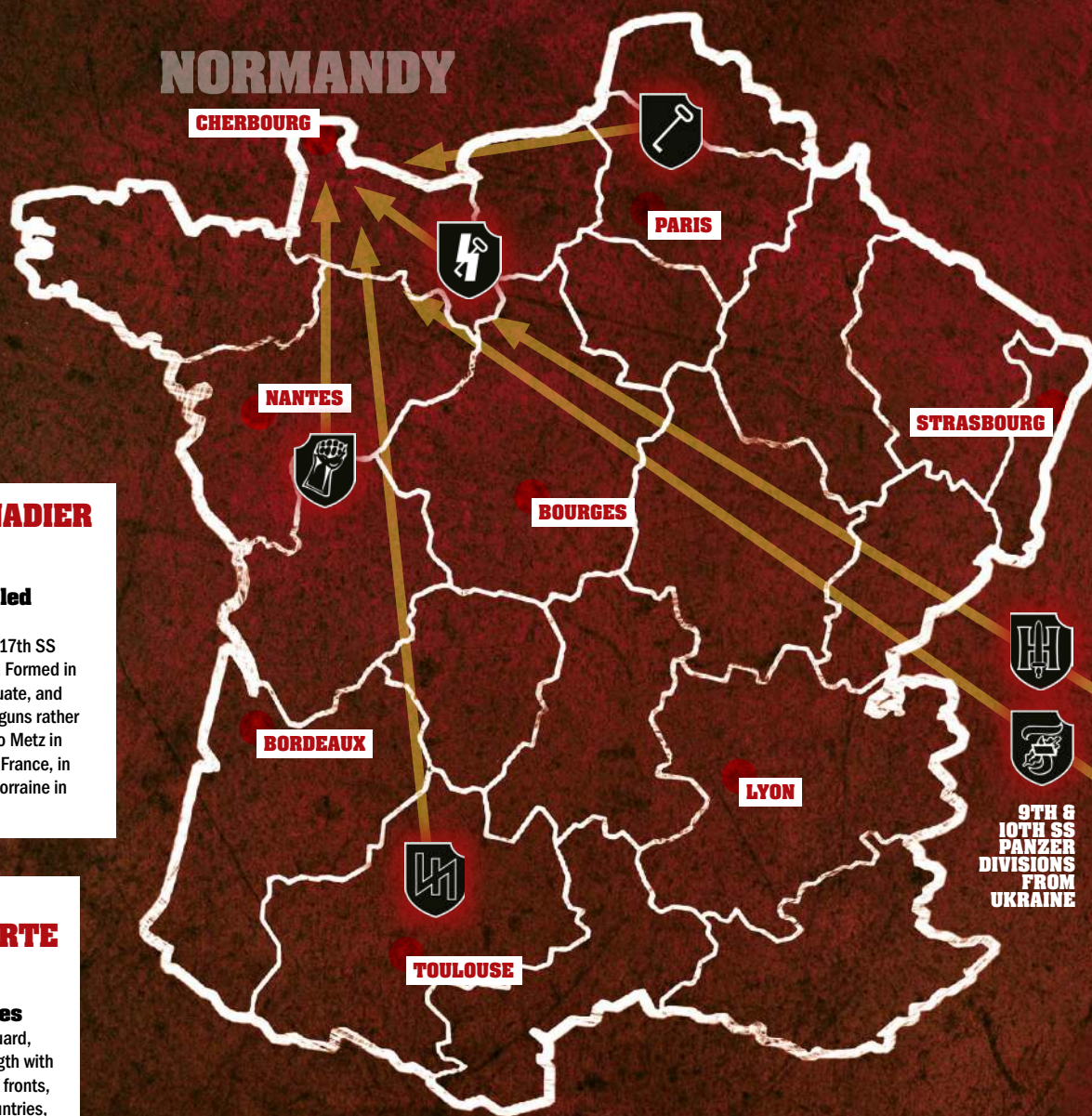


## SECOND SS PANZER DIVISION DAS REICH

**15,000 troops; 209 tanks, self-propelled assault guns and armoured vehicles**

The oldest of the initially designated Waffen-SS armoured divisions, Second SS Panzer was formed in the autumn of 1939, originally as the SS-Verfügungstruppe. Renamed Reich in 1941 and Das Reich the next year, the division participated in the invasion of France and the Low Countries in 1940, the Balkan invasion of 1941, Operation Barbarossa and major battles on the Eastern Front, including Kharkov and Kursk, extensive combat in Normandy and during the Ardennes Offensive in late 1944, finally surrendering to US forces in Czechoslovakia in 1945.

## NORMANDY



**"FORMED IN THE 1920s AS HITLER'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, THE LEIBSTANDARTE GREW TO REGIMENTAL AND DIVISIONAL STRENGTH"**



## NINTH SS PANZER DIVISION HOHENSTAUFEN

**18,000 troops; 154 tanks and self-propelled assault guns**

In February 1943 the SS Division Hohenstaufen was raised primarily from conscripts of the Reich Labour Service. In October it became a panzer division, and it was activated in December. Its first action occurred at Tamopol on the Eastern Front in March 1944, and it was transferred to Normandy within days of the Allied landings. The Ninth was instrumental in defeating British airborne troops at Arnhem, Holland, during Operation Market Garden. It later fought in the Ardennes Offensive and surrendered in Austria.



## TENTH SS PANZER DIVISION FRUNDSBERG

**13,552 troops; 142 tanks and other armoured vehicles**

Comprised mainly of conscripts, the Tenth SS Panzer Division Frundsberg was raised in January 1943 and became operational 13 months later, seeing its first combat in Ukraine in the spring of 1944 alongside the Ninth SS Panzer Division. After retreating from Normandy into Belgium, Tenth SS Panzer was ordered to refit near Arnhem, Holland, and participated in the repulse of British airborne forces during Operation Market Garden. After fighting in Alsace in early 1945, the division returned to the Eastern Front and surrendered in Czechoslovakia.

Young men of the 12th  
SS Panzer Division  
Hitlerjugend are taken  
prisoner, 1944

**"IN EARLY 1943 THE NUCLEUS OF THE 12TH  
SS PANZER DIVISION WAS FORMED AROUND  
A CADRE FROM THE FIRST SS LEIBSTANDARTE  
ADOLF HITLER. THE EMPHASIS WAS ON  
RECRUITING YOUNG MEN OF THE HITLER YOUTH"**



101st SS Heavy Tank Battalion, a component of the I SS Panzer Corps later attached to the First SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte, had run the gauntlet of Allied fighter-bombers from near Lisieux. At the head of a reconnaissance element Lieutenant Michael Wittmann, commander of its Second Company, stood in the turret of his Tiger tank, watching a British armoured column as it exited Villers-Bocage and pulled off along the national highway near the crest of Hill 213, dominating the road to Caen. Wittmann was already a legend in the German armed forces – an armour ace on the Eastern Front with 117 Soviet tanks to his credit and the Knight's Cross at his throat.

Wittmann's lone tank burst from cover on the opposite side of the hill and attacked the armoured vehicles of the Fourth County of London Yeomanry and its accompanying First Battalion, Rifle Brigade. Wittmann destroyed the leading halftrack, rumbled along a parallel cart path and knocked out the rear tank. He then ravaged the vehicles trapped in between.

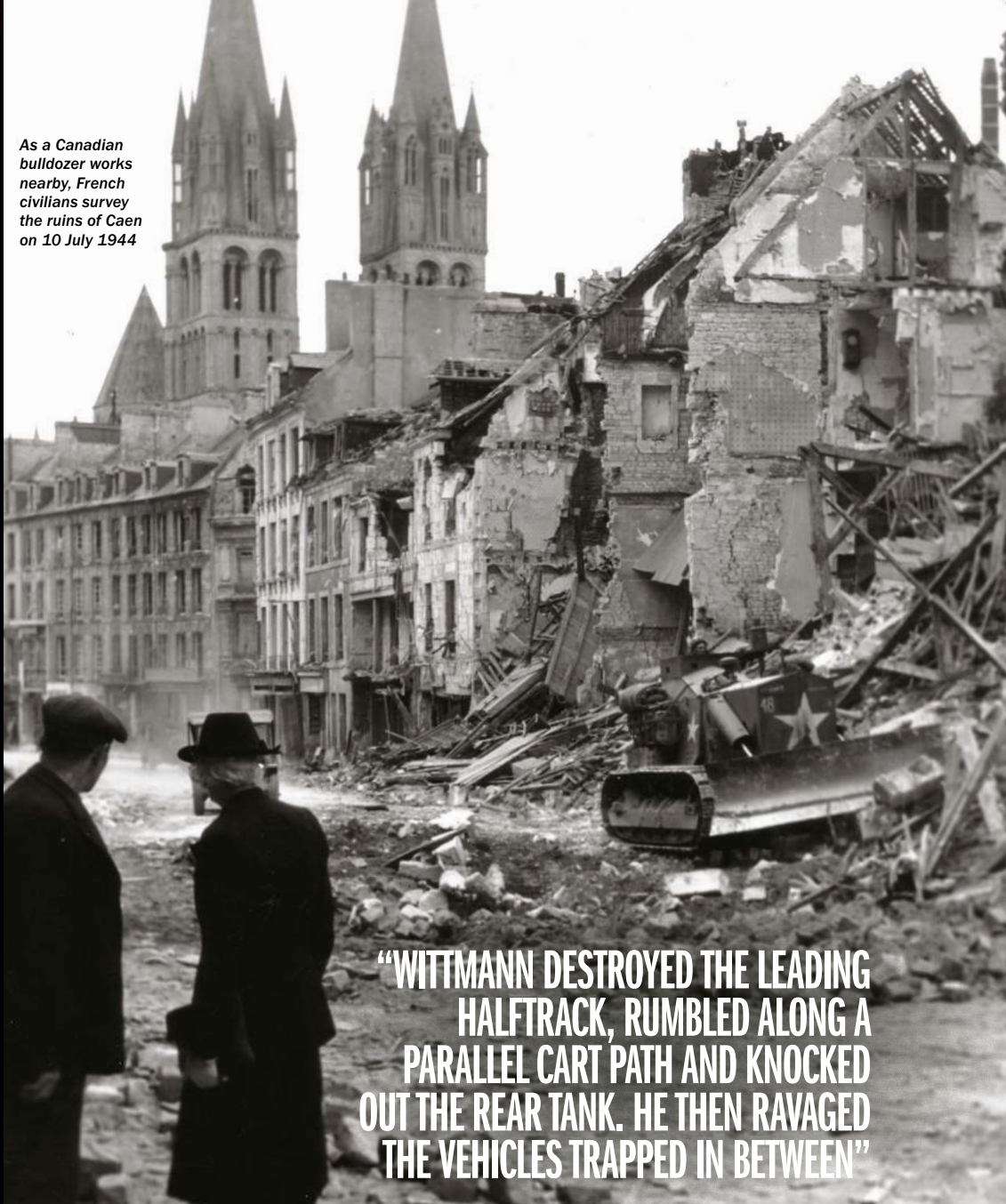
Within minutes the British column was in disarray. Plumes of smoke twisted skyward. Joined by three more Tigers and a lone Panzer IV, Wittmann rolled into Villers-Bocage, where other targets were shot to pieces with 88mm projectiles. British anti-tank guns got into action and disabled three German vehicles. Wittmann's Tiger lost a track. He dismounted, evaded capture, and later returned to the scene with additional armour. When the fighting at Villers-Bocage subsided, 25 British tanks and 28 other armoured vehicles had been destroyed. Wittmann was personally credited with 11 tank and 13 other vehicle kills.

Elsewhere, the 12th SS Hitlerjugend battered the British Sixth Armoured Regiment at Les Mesnil-Patry, its 88mm guns destroying 37 tanks in a fight that petered out on 14 June. Meanwhile, elements of Panzer Lehr and the Second SS Panzer Division Das Reich, finally arriving in strength, stabilised the front around Caen, extinguishing any Allied hope of a swift capture of the city. The journey of Das Reich to Normandy had been torturous, as Allied aircraft ravaged its columns and resistance groups derailed trains carrying troops, tanks and guns.

Further west, American troops of the 101st Airborne Division pushed the remnants of the German Sixth Parachute Regiment out of Carentan after a bloody, protracted street brawl, allowing the US V and VII Corps to consolidate a 95-kilometre (60-mile) front wedged 16 kilometres (ten miles) deep into Normandy. On 10 June the 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division Götz von Berlichingen was stopped in its thrust towards Carentan, in support of the defenders, by a handful of American paratroopers from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, who had landed far from their assigned drop zones. For two days the paratroops held the SS at bay before they were overwhelmed. 32 of their number finally lay dead.

Although the delay had been costly, the 17th SS and Sixth Parachute mounted a fierce counterattack on 13 June as SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 37 engaged the 502nd and 506th Parachute Infantry Regiments, 101st Airborne, about a kilometre southwest of Carentan, near Hill 30. The outgunned Americans were on the brink of

*As a Canadian bulldozer works nearby, French civilians survey the ruins of Caen on 10 July 1944*



**“WITTMANN DESTROYED THE LEADING HALFTRACK, RUMBLED ALONG A PARALLEL CART PATH AND KNOCKED OUT THE REAR TANK. HE THEN RAVAGED THE VEHICLES TRAPPED IN BETWEEN”**

## KURT ‘PANZER’ MEYER

**A BOLD AND SUCCESSFUL SOLDIER, WAS ALSO A CONVICTED WAR CRIMINAL**

Some accounts assert that Kurt ‘Panzer’ Meyer earned his nickname because of aggressive battlefield conduct, others relate that he fell off a roof while a police cadet, breaking 18 bones, and his friends thereafter called him ‘Panzer’ because he was tough like a tank. Born to a lower-class family on 23 December 1910, Meyer joined the Nazi Party in 1930 and the SS a year later, eventually rising to the rank of major general.

With the outbreak of the war, Meyer was with the First SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, serving in the Polish campaign and receiving the Iron Cross, Second Class. He earned the Iron Cross, First Class, fighting in France and the Knight's Cross in Greece. During Operation Barbarossa he received the German Cross in gold.

In the summer of 1943 Meyer was assigned a regiment of the newly formed 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend. He had already developed a reputation for heroism and was fond of leading his troops into battle while riding a motorcycle. Supremely confident, he later led the entire division in Normandy. By the end of August 1944 he had received the oak leaves and swords to his Knight's Cross. He was captured by partisans in September 1944 and handed over to American forces.

Meyer was associated with several atrocities, including the massacre of Canadian prisoners in Normandy. He was later tried and convicted of war crimes. A death sentence was commuted to life in prison, and he was released in 1954. Meyer died in 1961 at the age of 51.



*Kurt ‘Panzer’ Meyer led the 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend in Normandy and is remembered for the war crimes committed under his command*



**Above:** Weeks after his spectacular performance at Villers-Bocage, SS tank ace Michael Wittmann was killed in action in Normandy

defeat when 60 tanks of Combat Command A, Second Armored Division, supported by infantry from the US 29th Division stopped the enemy thrust, securing Carentan and the linkup of the two American corps. Known as the Battle of Bloody Gulch, the action cost the Germans four tanks, 43 killed and 89 wounded. For the rest of the month, the 17th SS battled the Americans around Saint-Lo and Coutances, losing more than half its strength.

The fight for Caen continued virtually without respite. On 22 June the British 11th Armoured Division thrust southward again towards Hill 112 and collided with the battered 12th SS Hitlerjugend. Still full of fight, the teenage fanatics sacrificed themselves. 20-year-old Emil Dürr unleashed a shoulder-fired Panzerfaust anti-tank weapon against a British M4 Sherman. Setting the tank on fire, he rushed forward and threw a 'sticky bomb' coated with adhesive against its side. When the explosive failed to stick, Dürr clutched the charge against the side of the tank, sacrificing his own life.

Meanwhile, Hitler ordered II SS Panzer Corps to Normandy, including the Ninth and Tenth SS Panzer Divisions from Ukraine. As they prepared a major counterattack, these divisions were to relieve the depleted 12th SS and Panzer Lehr.

Montgomery mounted a major push to take Caen from the west on 26 June. Operation Epsom deployed three infantry divisions and two armoured brigades, with over 700 artillery pieces in support. The 12th SS Hitlerjugend fought with dogged determination, but the British advance continued through the following day, and Hill 112 was captured on 28 June. Colonel Meyer recalled the ferocity of his command at the town of Fontenoy: "The tank versus tank action starts," he wrote. "Thick, black, oily smoke rolls over the battlefield. Battle-weary grenadiers wave to me yelling out jokes, their eyes shining. It mystifies me where these youngsters are getting the strength to live through such a storm of steel. They assure me again and again that they will defend the rubble to the last round and will hold their positions against all comers."

Amid the chaos of Epsom, the Ninth and Tenth SS Panzer Divisions arrived. All thought of a massed counterattack evaporated in the smoke and flame and horrific shelling of Allied warships off the Norman coast, the concussions of their large-calibre shells capable of flipping a Tiger tank end over end. The SS counterstrike never gained momentum,

**Left:** Field Marshal Erwin Rommel led German Army Group B in Normandy until he was seriously wounded by strafing Allied aircraft

but it was enough to give the British pause. On 30 June they withdrew from their bridgehead across the Odon River, the Scottish 15th Division having lost over 2,300 men. The 12th SS had suffered 800 irreplaceable casualties.

In early July the American VIII Corps struck south towards Coutances and managed to advance only 11 kilometres (seven miles) in 12 days, as two battalions of the Second SS Panzer Division fought alongside the 15th Parachute Regiment, inflicting about 10,000 casualties on the attackers. Concurrently, the VII Corps advanced southwest from Carentan and ran into a buzzsaw. The US Fourth Infantry Division alone lost 2,300 killed and wounded in combat with the tenacious 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division and the Sixth Parachute Regiment. The performance of the 17th SS was remarkable given that it was not fully combat ready when summoned to Normandy from Thouars, missing 40 per cent of its officers and NCOs. Its tanks and assault guns also arrived in piecemeal fashion due to a lack of transport. By late June it had suffered 900 casualties, and one of its panzer regiments could muster only 18 self-propelled assault guns.

Despite the stand of a battle group that included a regiment of the 17th and three infantry battalions, the US XIX Corps made rapid progress towards the town of Saint-Lo before the Second SS Das Reich brought the movement to a temporary halt. A counterattack by Panzer Lehr made progress but ground to a halt under Allied air attacks. The town did not fall to the Americans until 18 June. As sluggish as the Allied progress in Normandy had become, the Germans were decidedly reactionary, forced to parry each Allied thrust, and were slowly losing a war of attrition.

Simultaneously, the British renewed their effort to take Caen with Operation Charnwood on 8 July. The Third Canadian Division fought panzergrenadiers for control of Carpiquet, while the beleaguered 12th SS Hitlerjugend was pummelled with 2,600 tons of Allied bombs, destroying the heart of Caen in the process. During their fight amid the rubble of the town, the British lost 103 tanks, many of them to 88mm anti-aircraft guns turned into anti-tank weapons. One 12th SS crew destroyed three British tanks, fired its last round, and died to a man in its gun pit during hand-to-hand fighting.

Finally, Colonel Meyer defied a stand fast order from Hitler and withdrew the remnants of his Hitlerjugend Division, because he could not "watch those youngsters being sacrificed to a senseless order". A shadow of itself after Charnwood, the 12th SS counted only a few hundred infantrymen and 40 of its original complement of 150 tanks.

Within a week, Montgomery launched Operation Goodwood, intended to complete the capture of Caen. After a stunning air bombardment, British tanks rolled southward towards Bourguébus ridge, where the Germans had assembled a breakwater of more than 500 field guns and multi-barrelled mortars, with a mobile reserve of roughly 80 tanks. By the afternoon, a concerted counterattack from the First SS Leibstandarte and 21st Panzer

# REVENGE OF THE PANZERS

**THE WAFEN-SS DIVISIONS COMMITTED MULTIPLE ATROCITIES IN NORMANDY**

SS troops in Normandy were responsible for several atrocities committed after the Allied landings on 6 June 1944. The 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend is believed to be guilty of killing up to 156 Canadian prisoners early in the Normandy campaign. On 7 June soldiers under Colonel Kurt Meyer shot 11 Canadians in the back of the head at the Abbey d'Ardenne. Seven more were murdered the next day. They executed 45 Canadian prisoners at the Chateau d'Audrieu on 8 June.

The journey of the Second SS Division Das Reich to Normandy from Toulouse led to the infamous murder of 642 men, women and children at Oradour-sur-Glane. Troops of the Fourth SS Panzergrenadier Regiment Der Führer under Major Adolf Diekmann committed the atrocity supposedly in reprisal for the kidnapping of an SS officer. The men were led to barns and outbuildings, machine-gunned and set on fire. Women and children were locked in the village church, which was torched. Those who tried to escape were shot. One woman survived.

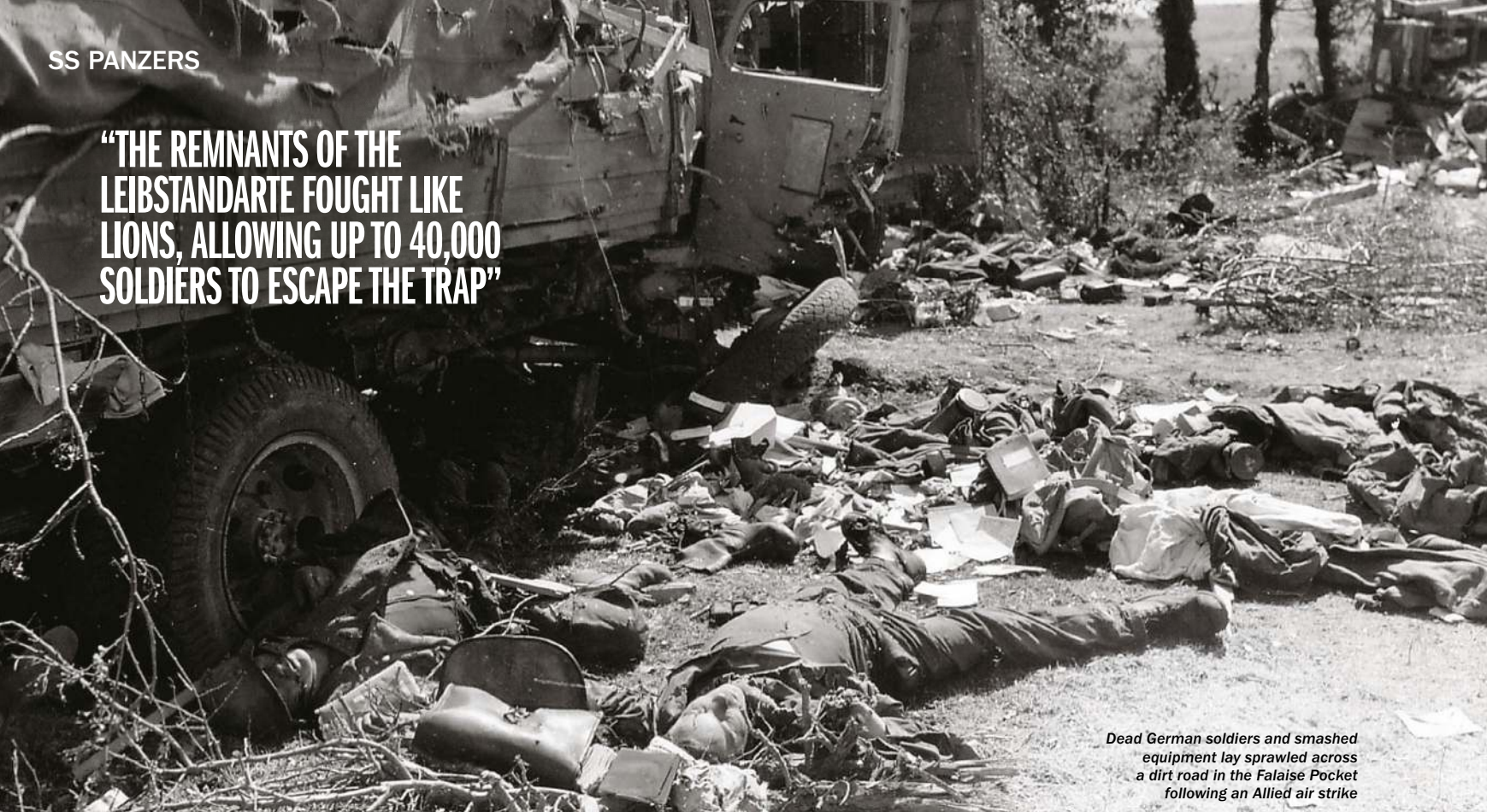
During their retreat from France, soldiers of the First SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler and the 12th SS murdered over 30 French civilians. A 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division soldier was convicted of executing two captured American airmen on 17 June 1944, at Montmartin-en-Graignes.

## "WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE LOCKED IN THE VILLAGE CHURCH, WHICH WAS TORCHED. THOSE WHO TRIED TO ESCAPE WERE SHOT. ONE WOMAN SURVIVED"

*After soldiers of the Second SS Panzer Division murdered most of its inhabitants, the village of Oradour-sur-Glane was declared a memorial*



**"THE REMNANTS OF THE LEIBSTANDARTE FOUGHT LIKE LIONS, ALLOWING UP TO 40,000 SOLDIERS TO ESCAPE THE TRAP"**



*Dead German soldiers and smashed equipment lay sprawled across a dirt road in the Falaise Pocket following an Allied air strike*

stopped the British thrust. The Leibstandarte's II Battalion, First SS Panzer Regiment moved 13 Panther tanks forward, engaging 60 British tanks and destroying 20 while occupying the village of Soliers. The First Battalion, First SS Panzer Regiment fought the British Ninth Armoured Brigade to a standstill. The Germans held the ridge for two more days, withdrawing only after destroying more than 30 per cent of the British armour in Normandy – an astonishing 500 tanks. Although Montgomery at last claimed Caen, the German defenders had prevented a breakout into open country.

By late July weeks of hard fighting had shredded the SS divisions committed to Normandy, and their counterparts in the Heer (army) had fared no better. Still, Allied formations had been contained, hung up in the bocage and unable to execute a rapid advance across France to the German frontier.

On 25 July Operation Cobra changed the dynamic of the campaign. Following saturation bombing, three American divisions plunged through the German lines. Panzer Lehr was virtually annihilated, while the Second SS Das Reich and 17th SS Panzergrenadier Divisions fought stubbornly, but the floodgates had been opened. While British progress outside Caen was slow, the American drive threatened to outflank the Germans in Normandy entirely.

On 7 August the forlorn hope of cutting off the American advance at its narrowest point near the town of Mortain commenced. Das Reich, the Leibstandarte and elements of the 17th SS joined the Second and 116th Panzer Divisions in a counterattack ordered by Hitler, codenamed Operation Lüttich. Immediately, the timetable of the attack, poised to hit the US 30th Division, was thrown awry. A damaged Allied fighter-bomber crashed into the lead Leibstandarte tank, halting the advance for some time. A platoon of 66 American soldiers,

supported by artillery, threw back an SS regiment at Abbaye Blanche. The best progress was achieved by Das Reich, advancing 6.5 kilometres (four miles), capturing Mortain and surrounding the American Second Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment on nearby Hill 314, at a cost of 14 precious tanks.

American artillery fire thwarted an attempt by men of the 17th SS to claim the high ground. The Americans held out for another four days on Hill 314, resupplied by air. The German attack spluttered to a halt elsewhere and had actually helped to precipitate a catastrophe. With most of their remaining armour concentrated in the south, the possibility for a rapid encirclement of the entire German Seventh and Fifth Panzer Armies materialised.

In the wake of Operation Lüttich, the Germans formed a new defensive line around the town of Falaise. On 8 August Montgomery launched Operation Totalize towards this concentration, two armoured divisions leading the way. Once again the British and Canadian forces ran into the stalwart 12th SS. Two days of bitter fighting left Montgomery short

of his objective, largely due to Colonel Meyer, who rallied a panic-stricken Feldheer infantry division. Still, the northern shoulder of a giant Allied pincer was nearly in position.

During late August, roughly 100,000 German troops were trapped in the Falaise Pocket. 60 men of the 12th SS fought to keep the escape route open north of Argentan. After three days, four of them were captured alive. Other men of the 12th SS Hitlerjugend kept the collapsing gap open while the remnants of the Leibstandarte fought like lions, allowing up to 40,000 soldiers to escape the trap. The First SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte had held the southern shoulder of the gap, conducting a fighting withdrawal. On the nights of 13-14 August, the skeleton of Das Reich passed through the Leibstandarte en route to a new defensive line at Champosoult. On the evening of 16 August, the Leibstandarte began its final movement. Foggy weather the next day allowed much of those division's survivors to cross the River Orne and reach relative safety.

The ordeal of the SS divisions in Normandy had come to a catastrophic conclusion. Their losses were horrendous: the Leibstandarte had suffered 5,000 casualties and was forced to abandon virtually all its remaining tanks and artillery during the retreat at Falaise. The Ninth SS Panzer Division lost half its strength – about 9,000 men – and the Tenth SS Panzer had been reduced to four battalions of infantry and not a single tank. The 17th SS was depleted to the extent that its remaining forces were broken into battlegroups that concentrated at the city of Metz after escaping the Falaise Pocket. Das Reich had been devastated, with only 15 tanks and 450 soldiers able to bear arms. By 22 August Army Group B reported that the 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend consisted of only 300 soldiers and 10 tanks: it had been utterly destroyed in Normandy.

*Hit by a German mortar round, an ammunition carrier of the British 11th Armoured Division erupts during Operation Epsom outside Caen*



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# REFLECTIONS

AN INTERVIEW WITH FIELD MARSHAL  
THE LORD BRAMALL KG, GCB, OBE, MC

This esteemed military veteran and former head of the British Armed forces discusses his wartime experiences, Russia, the 'New Cold War' and the future of warfare

WORDS TOM GARNER

Over a prestigious 75-year career, Lord Edwin Bramall has served at nearly every level of the British military. As a young officer he took part in the Allied invasion of Normandy, while much later he would play a very different role in another invasion – helping to mastermind the San Carlos landings in the Falklands War, 1982. There is little wonder then that he is considered one of the country's foremost military thinkers, both at the strategic and tactical levels.

After WWII, he went on to serve his country during several further conflicts, and throughout the Cold War. After

retiring from the army, he sat in the House of Lords, where he was a vocal critic of the Second Iraq War, as well as the nuclear deterrent. Now aged 94, he remains sharp, incisive, with a unique insight into recent military history.

Lord Bramall's recent book, *The Bramall Papers: Reflections on War and Peace*, contains a wealth of his speeches, notes, and letters, relating his thoughts on military strategy as well as his own personal experiences. Over the next few pages, he shares some reflections on his career, the threats facing us today, as well as thoughts on the future of the British military and its stance in the modern world.

**"I JOINED THE HOME GUARD AT 17 WHEN THERE WAS STILL SOME THREAT OF INVASION AND THEN I JOINED THE ARMY IN THE RANKS AS AN ORDINARY SOLDIER IMMEDIATELY AFTER I LEFT SCHOOL WHEN I WAS 18"**

# ON WAR



## When did you join the armed forces?

I'm very much [of the] WWII generation because... at 16 I watched the Battle of Britain overhead on a vantage point in East Sussex. I joined the Home Guard at 17 when there was still some threat of invasion, and then I joined the army in the ranks as an ordinary soldier immediately after I left school, when I was 18. I was a lance corporal, then I trained to be an officer, and I got the commission and trained in Yorkshire, and after that I took part in the Normandy invasion.

I landed on 7 June and was in action on the 8th near the beaches. I was wounded in July when I was south of Caen, but I was evacuated, and I got back about five weeks later to my battalion just at the time of the closing of the Falaise Pocket. I went up right the way through to Hamburg, so I saw quite a lot of the war.

## What are your memories of Normandy? You landed at Juno beach?

I landed at Juno beach on the evening of 7 June. A lot of clutter was on the beach and the 'beach masters' were getting everybody off. There was a desolatory air raid – but very desolatory because we did have complete air superiority – and we went inland. We were the motorised infantry of an armoured brigade, and on the next day, 8 June, we went to a place called Bologne et Buiston, which was on the join between the Canadian and the British invasion areas.

We were in sight of Caen and so we went into defensive deployments there and saw the Germans make a big attack on the Canadians, just next door really. It was very loud, but we were able to bring down artillery fire and those things to disrupt anything that came down. We could see the spires of Caen just in front of us.

We then took part in our first big battle, called Epsom. We went down the flank [towards] Carpiquet airfield. The Germans had some of the 12th SS there, threatening the Allied flank, so we were doing flank protection. There was a lot of artillery fire and snipers, but eventually we went round south of Caen. This was a few weeks later, and I was wounded under rather unpleasant circumstances.

## What were the circumstances of you becoming wounded?

We were spread out and waiting to go forward after the 43rd Wessex Division had captured Maltot, and we were going forward to seize the bridges over the Orne River. So we were in open ground and suddenly there was a terrific artillery barrage that came down on us. About

Lord Bramall, pictured wearing the medals and decorations he acquired from over 40 years of service with the British Army

## REFLECTIONS ON WAR

seven of us were in a half-track vehicle, so when all this started to come down, we got under what cover we could – under the vehicle. It didn't really provide that much [protection], but it felt like cover. I was lying next to another platoon commander and we were chatting. I'm not sure who, but one of us [said] to the other, "Do you think we've had it?" in a fairly calm voice. It's funny really as you should be really nervous. But then suddenly a shell came right down onto the vehicle and went straight through and burst.

When the dust had settled I looked at my companion who was lying next to me: he was dead, and pitch black. He must have got the whole force of the explosion because he was that black with the blast. All the others were dead too – the company commander and sergeant major were the only other ones who were still [alive].

I felt a burning sensation down my left hand side and a lot of things were on fire all around, and I thought, "Oh I've caught fire!", so I remember rather stupidly rolling on my side trying to put the fire out. But it wasn't the fire, I'd been hit by shrapnel.

At that moment the scout platoon commander came, and I suggested we get all the vehicles that were scattered around away: there was obviously an [enemy] observation post, so we had better get them back so the vehicles can't be spotted, and I ran over to my own vehicle. It had had its door blown off, but nothing worse than that. We loaded the cars and got them behind cover, and eventually I went to the first-aid post.

In July I got back to our battalion just as the Falaise Pocket was being closed, and after that of course the war was absolutely up our street as motorised infantry – we went storming up to northwest France.

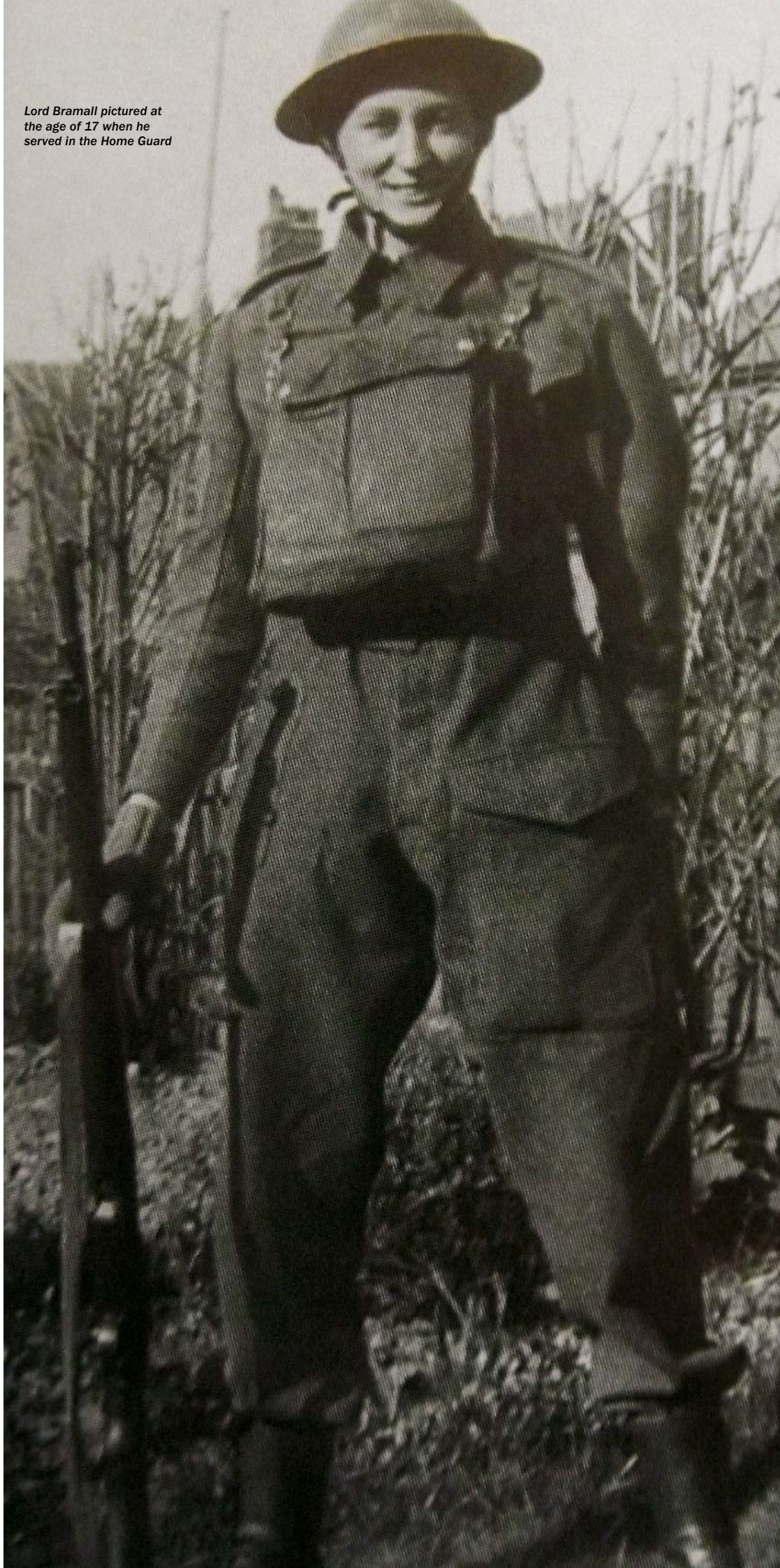
I received a slight bullet wound there, on the Somme. I like to say I was wounded on the Somme, but I was only away for a few days. Then we reached Holland. This was on the flanks of [Operation] Market Garden, so we arrived and experienced a lot of fighting along various canals. I became an intelligence officer for the rest of the way up into Holland, which saw some quite heavy fighting during the last weeks of the war.

### **Can you describe the action for which you were awarded the Military Cross?**

In Holland I was out on patrol, going to find out where the Germans were, and we got into a bit of trouble in a wood. I was more or less in front, when my sergeant was hit, and we were stuck down and we had to get ourselves out of it. So I managed to move around and throw grenades, then I charged somebody with my Sten gun, which luckily worked. We took some of the Germans prisoner and others buzzed off.

**"WHEN THE DUST HAD SETTLED  
I LOOKED AT MY COMPANION  
WHO WAS LYING NEXT TO ME. HE  
WAS DEAD, AND PITCH BLACK"**

*Lord Bramall pictured at the age of 17 when he served in the Home Guard*

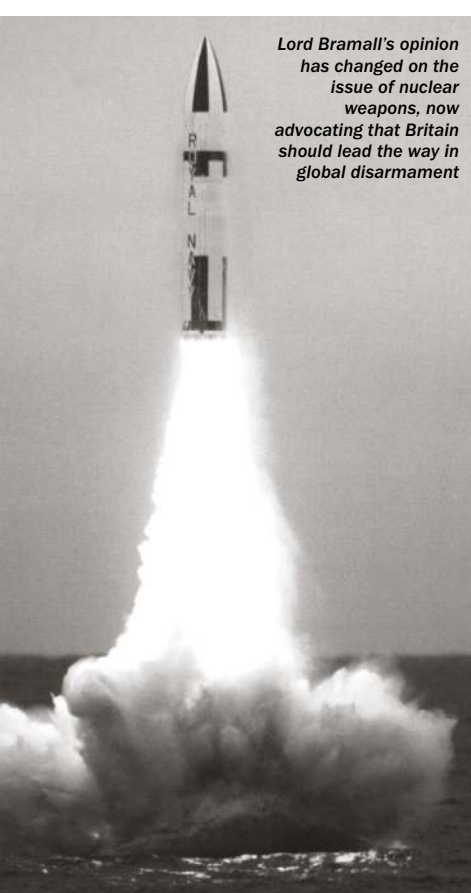




Lord Bramall served in Normandy, Holland and later in Germany during the Cold War



Montgomery awards Lord Bramall the Military Cross in 1945



Lord Bramall's opinion has changed on the issue of nuclear weapons, now advocating that Britain should lead the way in global disarmament



Lord Bramall joined the army straight after leaving school, when he was 18

**"I FELT A BURNING SENSATION DOWN MY LEFT HAND SIDE AND A LOT OF THINGS WERE ON FIRE ALL AROUND, AND I THOUGHT, 'OH I'VE CAUGHT FIRE!', SO RATHER STUPIDLY I REMEMBER ROLLING ON MY SIDE TRYING TO PUT THE FIRE OUT. BUT IT WASN'T THE FIRE, I'D BEEN HIT BY SHRAPNEL"**

**You were personally involved in the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust exhibition. Can you describe your experience at Belsen?**

I wasn't one of the people who actually went into Belsen, but I was very conscious of it because we were on the centre line running straight into [the camp]. My battalion was moving forward and suddenly we got the order to halt. Apparently the Germans came out with a white flag, and the message came that there was something there that... it wasn't right to fight over... I didn't know whether it was a lunatic asylum or what it was, but... we were told to dig in and not go any further. Then all the medical teams were brought up and the whole awfulness of Belsen was revealed.

Belsen wasn't a death camp like Auschwitz with gas chambers. In fact they were trying to hide [the camp] and they were sending [the inmates] back, but of course the Germans couldn't look after them – they didn't have enough food. They had sadistic guards and the inmates were dying in their hundreds and thousands. It was death by no care, and I think it dawned on all of us...

**After the war ended in Europe, you were re-posted to the Far East. What was it like seeing those scenes of devastation and witnessing the level of destruction on both continents?**

I was able to see Hiroshima and Hamburg within a few months of each other. Hamburg was just as bad as Hiroshima. We'd seen a certain amount of devastation all the way across northwest Europe, but until we got to Hamburg, we were never actually fighting in a big town. We saw the destruction of villages and so on, but by the time we got to Hamburg,

**"BY THE TIME WE GOT TO HAMBURG, IT HAD RECEIVED A SERIES OF THE MOST APPALLING RAIDS – IT HAD HAD AN ENORMOUS NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED AND IT LOOKED LIKE H.G. WELLS'S VISION OF THINGS TO COME. IT WAS TERRIBLE"**

it had received a series of the most appalling raids – it had had an enormous number of people killed and it looked like H.G. Wells's [vision of] things to come. It was terrible.

When we got to Japan, I was able to go and see Hiroshima. It had had the same number of casualties as Hamburg, but [it had happened] in an instant instead of over a series of raids. You couldn't really tell a town had been there. Hamburg was gutted and everything was piles of rubble, but it didn't look utterly destroyed. But in Hiroshima, two or three buildings was all that was left. The number of casualties was the same – c. 150,000 – but in Hiroshima it was done in a fraction [of the time].

As I say in *The Bramall Papers*, it's a realisation of what total war was going to be and the world could not be stupid enough to get itself into a horrible war like that. Nuclear weapons, of course they are intended for threatening – not for using on other people, but threatening other people in case they want to do something nasty against you.

**To what extent do you think your experiences have shaped your career, as well as your military views?**

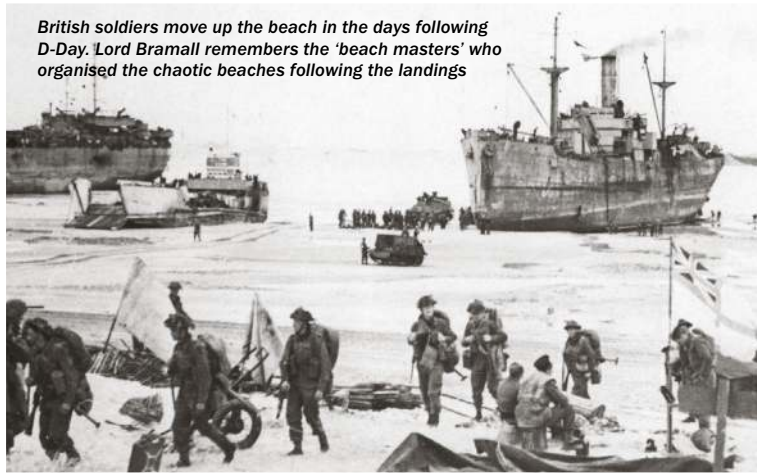
I think it convinced me that wars in which these sorts of things happen had to be somehow prevented. This is how the whole business of deterrent came to be... I think that when I commanded a division, I gave a lecture on what we were doing, and my first thing was [to say] "We are here not to fight a war but to prevent a war, and this is what we were doing". But to prevent a war you had to be ready to fight.

You had to be ready to fight a war – not to action it, but to take part in one and of course be willing... This is why we had to adopt the nuclear deterrent and the strategy of flexible response. I mean I now have... different views about nuclear weapons and ideas, but back then I accepted the flexible response, which is that you only had nuclear weapons in the background. You were determined to confront the enemy, if you had to, with conventional forces, but you had to let them know that if you weren't able to hold them by conventional means, somehow, in the background, you might use nuclear weapons, which would of course be as damaging to them as it is to you.

**What is your opinion on the current threats facing Europe?**

I would say, "What do you mean by threat?" If you mean, "Is [Russia] going to have another go at taking over central Europe?" I would say absolutely not... One of the things that is influencing [Putin] to make him appear a threat is that when the Cold War had finished we moved a whole NATO front line and NATO forces right up onto the Russian border. Well if you were a Russian – not just Putin – you would think it was terrible.

British soldiers move up the beach in the days following D-Day. Lord Bramall remembers the 'beach masters' who organised the chaotic beaches following the landings



Lord Bramall in Borneo when he was commanding officer of Second Green Jackets, alongside a Sioux helicopter



Above: Lord Bramall meets men of 3 Para in June 1982 on board Mv Norland, following the Falklands War



Above: Conducting exercises in Germany, 1972. He spoke of always being prepared for war



Above: Bramall seeing off the task force before it set off for the Falklands – as Chief of the General Staff

Image: Alamy

Montgomery has become a controversial figure in British history, but Lord Bramall praised his crucial ability to inspire confidence in the British Army

# DEFENDING MONTY

IN HIS BOOK, *THE BRAMALL PAPERS*, LORD BRAMALL OFFERS HIS OWN TAKE ON ONE OF BRITAIN'S MOST LOVED AND LOATHED COMMANDERS

"Montgomery has rather fallen out with historians, and I think that is because historians wanted a sensational thing to [sell]... whereas I think early on Montgomery was in the hall of fame. Montgomery wasn't a very nice chap either, he was his own worst enemy, but he was an admirable professional.

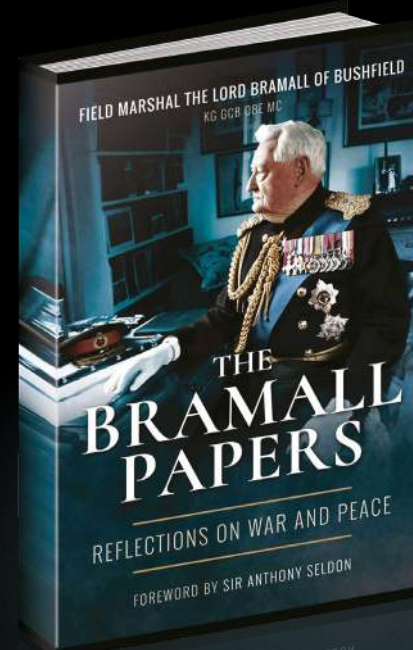
"What he did well was to put confidence back into the army, which it completely lacked, and that was what was needed, and only a chap like him, who was ruthlessly professional – whereas many of the generals were a bit amateurish – could do it.

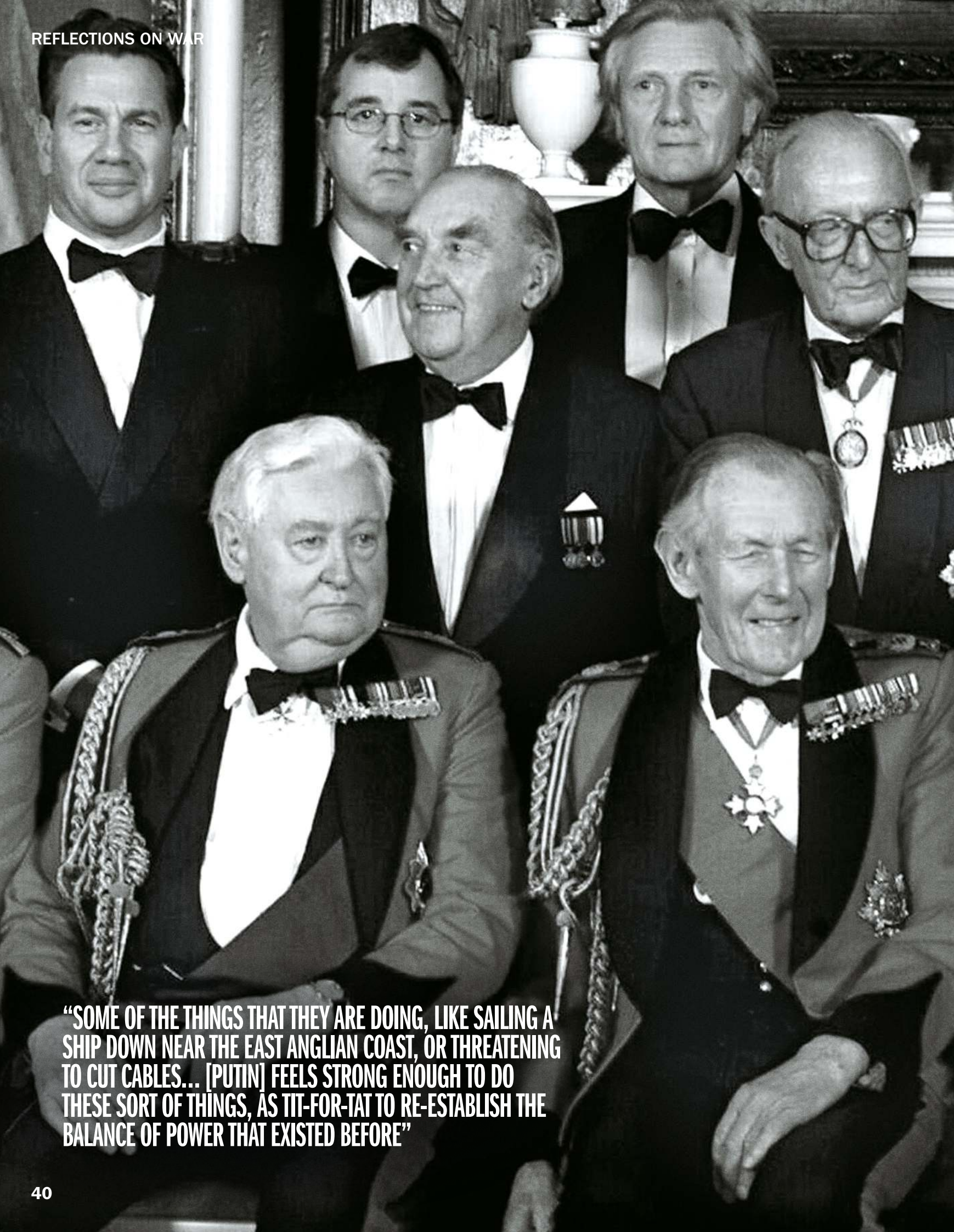
"I thought that his finest hour was the Normandy landings because he took a plan, which wouldn't have worked, made it into one and showed enormous confidence that it was going to be all right when Churchill had qualms... and Allenbrook had qualms, Eisenhower had qualms. Monty never had any doubts, and I listened to him, like many others. He filled us all with confidence and he had a plan – although it didn't always go according to plan, he knew how to amend it to keep the general strategy.

"He was very vain. He loved the adulation. The great thing about him was that he was a professional, which, except for a few cases, the British Army lacked. Auchinleck was a professional too and he was a bad picker, but many of the problems of the desert war was around the amateurish approach. He knew how to run a big battle. Confidence of course is the absolute essence of leadership. It's produced in a number of ways, but he gave confidence... Each battle we were in didn't always go exactly according to plan, but he knew how to win."

*'The Bramall Papers' offers a powerful insight into the thinking of one of Britain's most influential military minds, through decades of letters, lectures and speeches. It is available from [pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://pen-and-sword.co.uk)*

**"HE FILLED US ALL WITH CONFIDENCE AND HE HAD A PLAN – ALTHOUGH IT DIDN'T ALWAYS GO ACCORDING TO PLAN, HE KNEW HOW TO AMEND IT TO KEEP THE GENERAL STRATEGY"**





**"SOME OF THE THINGS THAT THEY ARE DOING, LIKE SAILING A SHIP DOWN NEAR THE EAST ANGLIAN COAST, OR THREATENING TO CUT CABLES... [PUTIN] FEELS STRONG ENOUGH TO DO THESE SORT OF THINGS, AS TIT-FOR-TAT TO RE-ESTABLISH THE BALANCE OF POWER THAT EXISTED BEFORE"**

*Field Marshal the Lord  
Bramall at an army  
benevolent fund in  
2004, alongside the  
Duke of Edinburgh and  
notable politicians and  
military leaders*



# ON THE FALKLANDS

LORD BRAMALL GIVES AN INSIGHT INTO THE THINKING BEHIND THE AMPHIBIOUS LANDINGS AT SAN CARLOS

"The San Carlos landings were absolutely brilliant. The navy was incredible, and San Carlos was chosen because it cut down the chances of there being any sea-skimming missiles there, and they landed without [major] casualties. I was with the CDS (chief of the defence staff) at the time and I heard a lot of the thing coming over real-time over satellite, and we knew not only that they had landed, but that they had come up against virtually no opposition at all.

"We had stressed, the chief of staff had stressed, I particularly stressed, that once the landing happened they should get out of the bridgehead and get across to the vital ground, otherwise I had awful visions of them getting stuck and there being an international ceasefire or something, and we would be out and the

[Argentiniens] would all be in winter quarters. Poor [General] Julian Thompson [commander of 3 Commando Brigade], he reckoned that his job was to consolidate the bridgehead until the reserve brigade arrived, and he was encouraged not to do anything else because, shortly after his landing, the Atlantic Conveyor went down with all but one of the Chinook helicopters, which were going to lift the force.

"So he was rather static, and he said he thought his job was consolidating the bridgehead. Eventually he had to be told by the commander-in-chief that he must get out... So what did he do, he had two options: one was to go for Goose Green, which was quite strong, 1,000 men... which would have been a threat to the flank. The other was to mask that and without the helicopters do a bash across to Stanley. Well I

thought that he more or less decided to do both options together.

"When the chiefs had vetted the plan with our commander-in-chief and the general staff, of which I was the head, we weren't too happy about San Carlos. We thought it was too far away from where they had to go and it would have been better to land [elsewhere]. I expressed my misgivings to the CDS and he said that we'll talk to the commander-in-chief.

"The commander-in-chief convinced me that the reason they chose San Carlos, although it was a bit further than where they wanted to go, was that it was going to be much safer to do, with the air threat and the other threats, rather than if they'd been out in the open, where they would have been very vulnerable. I accepted that 100 per cent."



**"WE HAD STRESSED, THE CHIEF OF STAFF HAD STRESSED, I PARTICULARLY STRESSED, THAT ONCE THE LANDING HAPPENED THEY SHOULD GET OUT OF THE BRIDGEHEAD AND GET ACROSS TO THE VITAL GROUND"**

British forces move towards Stanley during the Falklands War, having landed at San Carlos



British troops land at San Carlos and establish a bridgehead on the islands

When I was commanding a division in Germany at the height of the Cold War, I had prepared, [and was] ready for the Soviet Union and their allies to come across the border. That is why we were deployed [there]. I didn't think it was terribly likely, but the Americans thought it was going to happen the next day. But equally, the Soviet Union was convinced that we were going to do that to them [and attack]. Now it may sound ludicrous, but they thought that.

Now, to have NATO troops on their border, with no buffer zone at all, cutting off a bit of Russia, they think it's a provocation and even a real threat. So some of the things that they are doing, like sailing a ship near the East Anglian coast, or threatening to cut cables... [Putin] feels strong enough to do these sort of things, as tit-for-tat to re-establish the balance of power that existed before. You have to bear that in mind.

So what threat is there? There's a threat that he will do even more to destabilise Britain or Europe or something like that, attacking one of our various functions. There is a threat and we have to have tactics to deal with that, but that doesn't mean that he's contemplating a vast invasion of Western Europe.

People seem to think... that if we get things wrong we will end up in the Third World War. Well the Third World War as such isn't really possible for a number of reasons, but there are so many other ways that one country can get it over another.

That doesn't mean of course that all military action will be [focused] on smaller things – it's happening in Iraq and Syria of course, but one has got to be very careful how one takes military action.

**"I OFTEN SAY THAT WE WON THE COLD WAR BUT WE LOST THE PEACE, BECAUSE THAT WAS THE MOMENT WHEN WE SHOULD HAVE PUT OUT THE HAND OF FRIENDSHIP"**

### **Could a similar common sense approach be applied to countries such as North Korea, for example?**

You see there again, it's awful. Kim Jong-un is not actually making or developing a nuclear weapon to use, because the last thing that he would want would be a war, in which he's bound to come off worse. What he's doing is the same that we've been doing over the last few years, to say, "Look, if you overstep the mark, we've got this that could be used." It is to stop an invasion of North Korea.

You see the thing is that you've got to try and deal with this [situation] as it happened in the Cold War. In the Cold War, the people in the east gradually realised that they would be better off under a different system than they would be at the moment.

However, I often say that we won the Cold War but we lost the peace, because that was the moment when we should have put out the hand of friendship and helped them. You think of the terrible indignity of the crumbling of the Soviet Empire – morale and self-esteem must have absolutely gone. Imagine if it happened to us. Putin is now getting great credit from his people for trying to claw some of this back... This is hitting back at what we've done.

### **Would you say there is a case for a form of sensible, slow disarmament?**

Yes. I believe [it should be done] in the long run, and people are even making measures of it. We consider whether possibly it would be a disadvantage to Britain when Iran won't disarm, but Pakistan are now thinking about it.

We give lip service to it, but someone's got to make a start, and I personally think that, if in the context of all this, the UK could say, "Look we've still got a nuclear deterrent... we've got it and that will last another ten to 15 years, but we don't want to extend it for another 50 years because there's no point."

We would make this point, to say that we're not going to extend our Trident [nuclear deterrent]. I think the UK would gain great credit out of this, and I think it would possibly start the ball rolling for people to do more of it.

### **What are your views on the UK's defence budget cuts? How does it affect the**

Lord Bramall last appeared in uniform at a Second Rifles Medal Parade in 2010





Lord Bramall, pictured alongside Lady Bramall and Sir Sigmund Sternberg, receiving the Inter-Faith Gold Medal from the International Council of Christians and Jews, 2001



Lord Bramall alongside Queen Elizabeth II at an event marking the 50th anniversary of the D-Day landings



Lord Bramall (right) sits with the other chiefs of staff during the Falklands war



Lord Bramall inspects soldiers during the Sovereign's Parade in 1985

## country's status as a military power?

Even if the spending on the extension of Trident was to come out of the defence budget – it might possibly not, but at the moment it does – that means that the cake is smaller. [The UK is] also hoisted with two enormous aircraft carriers, for which there was no strategic requirement, which should never have been allowed to go forward, and which the country can't afford. We can't man and we can't pay for things to go on them, and so we're hoisted with that as it's having to come out of the budget.

First of all there doesn't appear to be enough money to go around. Now having paid for all of these things – some of which you don't need – what else are you going to cut? I think if your military forces are going to be used more selectively, backed by dynamic diplomacy, which should include cyber warfare and all of these things, there appears to be some savings you can make in manpower, because the army spends most of its money on manpower.

The trouble if you cut too much... there is still a role for these forces in supporting and training other forces, such as in Iraq, Syria – you get terribly overstretched. I wouldn't like to see the army cut much below that.

More money has got to go on intelligence and cyber warfare, because cyber [attack] is the biggest threat. Yes there's a small terrorist threat, but it gets blown out of all proportion. When we had the IRA it was far worse than this. This is containable, but... you could get something like a dirty bomb and that would be unpleasant, but the biggest threat is cyber, the disruption of our infrastructure, and of course to be able to counter that requires money too.

## Does the increased threat of cyber warfare diminish the importance of the infantry and conventional armed forces?

Well it shouldn't, but I think it has been changing for some time and I don't know whether [the United Kingdom's armed forces have] changed...

We can't compete with the Russians' manpower... but that doesn't mean that you can't have elements in place to balance what Russia is likely to do.

The real trouble is the Baltic states – are we really going to go to war for them? But this is why we've got NATO forces. They are still needed for deterrent, they are still needed to back diplomacy and they are still needed to train friendly forces. All of this needs manpower and professional skills.

There's a place for NATO, because it ensures solidarity. I'd hate to think that NATO has to fight... but for solidarity and deterrent purposes I think NATO is important.

## Aside from cyber threats, what would you say are the main challenges to the British armed forces today?

We've got to spend our money on the right things, and we've got to obtain enough money to do this, because we're lumbered with the expenditure of the navy... We should have kept the Harrier and we should have kept a smaller platform. We need a bit more money and we want to make certain that we have sufficient forces to back our diplomacy, and that includes a credible deterrent.

We want a reconnaissance aircraft, or frigates, because they can project power, but I can't say because I don't know exactly... I suspect we need a bit more money, but we

**“WE’VE GOT TO SPEND OUR MONEY ON THE RIGHT THINGS, AND WE’VE GOT TO OBTAIN ENOUGH MONEY TO DO THIS, BECAUSE WE’RE LUMBERED WITH THE EXPENDITURE OF THE NAVY”**

need to make certain that the new types of threat, particularly cyber and intelligence threats, are covered. Whether we can do that and still spend billions... Of course if that doesn't come out of the defence money, then the function of this deterrent is questionable.

## As a former field marshal, what do you think are the essential qualities that a commander needs in modern warfare?

I think they've remained much the same... a robustness to stand not just the shocks of battle, but the shocks of political turmoil, and as you can imagine, being a chief of defence staff is quite a strain.

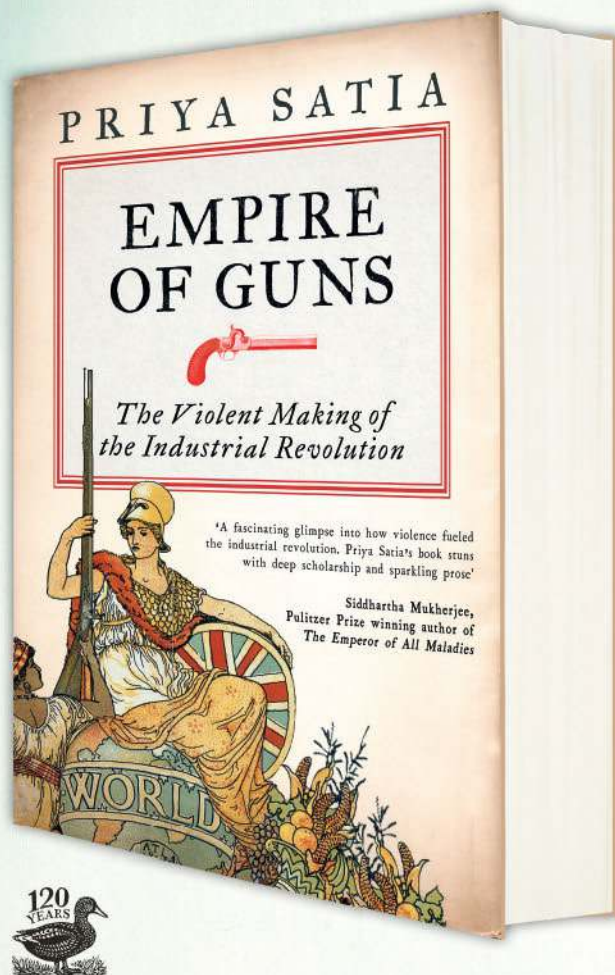
You've got to give your own forces confidence, and if they're all being cut the whole time – and my opinion on this is they're being cut – you're going to find it really difficult to recruit. So you've got to give confidence that they are needed in the new setting, that they've got a job to do, which certainly they have in backing diplomacy. They've got a job to do and of course we don't have enough of them.

## Having joined the British Army during the 1940s, what are your reflections on how it has changed over the decades up until the present day?

I think the army has been quite good at changing progressively really. I think that the turning point was Suez... Yes we still initially thought of Suez in the form of the Normandy invasion, of course, when in actual fact we did it much more direct.

But I think my chapter on Borneo in the book is quite important. It was an ideal use of force... It did just enough to see that the opposition was thwarted and not too much to escalate the thing, which was important.

I suppose that is the way in which the British Army has most changed – realising that land forces have got to be viewed rather more selectively in support of foreign policy, rather than on a large scale.



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Great Battles

# FRIEDLAND

The Fourth Coalition was hanging by a thread when Napoleon trapped a Russian army at this small town in Prussia

PRUSSIA 14 JUNE 1807



WORDS DAVID SMITH

## OPPOSING FORCES



### FRANCE

#### LEADERS:

Jean Lannes

Napoleon Bonaparte

#### INFANTRY:

47,700

CAVALRY: 15,400

ARTILLERY: 133

VS



### RUSSIA

#### LEADER:

Count von Bennigsen

#### INFANTRY:

41,600

CAVALRY: 13,400

ARTILLERY: 360

**T**he defeat of a combined Russian-Austrian army at Austerlitz on 2 December 1805 signalled the collapse of the Third Coalition and also marked the high point of Napoleon's career. After the stunning success, coming hot on the heels of the surrender of an Austrian army on 17 October, Napoleon appeared unstoppable.

In retrospect, it is possible to see that his army reached its peak in 1805 and would soon begin

an inexorable decline as the demands of near-constant campaigning took their toll. Certainly Napoleon's enemies were not about to give up. The Third Coalition was finished, but the British and Russians remained at war with France.

Napoleon made efforts to bring a conclusion to the seemingly endless string of wars, putting out feelers to Britain and Russia and attempting to keep Prussia out of the struggle. The death of the British prime minister, William Pitt 'the Younger', in January

1806 appeared to offer a glimmer of hope, but the new Whig administration was in no mood for compromise. In October 1806 Britain and Russia formed the heart of the Fourth Coalition, along with Prussia. Having watched from the sidelines for some time, French encroachments on German territory had finally persuaded the Prussians to join the struggle. Saxony, Sweden and Sicily were junior partners in the Fourth Coalition, which Napoleon moved swiftly to crush.

*Napoleon consults with his generals on his plan for the Battle of Friedland*



**“NAPOLEON MADE EFFORTS TO BRING A CONCLUSION TO THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS STRING OF WARS, PUTTING OUT FEELERS TO BRITAIN AND RUSSIA AND ATTEMPTING TO KEEP PRUSSIA OUT OF THE STRUGGLE”**

### Napoleon's 'blitzkrieg'

Northeast Bavaria became the staging point for the French Grande Armée, with an invasion of Prussia the initial goal. Napoleon's approach to the campaign has been likened to the German tactics in World War II, his intention being to destroy the Prussian army before the Russians could intervene. The results were stunning. In just 19 days the Prussians had effectively been knocked out of the war following the battles of Jena and Auerstädt on 14 October and the pursuit that had followed. Prussia had lost more than 150,000 men, either killed, wounded or captured, and French troops occupied Warsaw on 28 November.

With Britain offering limited military contributions to the Fourth Coalition, it was down to Russia to continue the struggle against France. Although his army remained formidable, Napoleon was already living on credit, having started to call up the annual allotment of conscripts early. His men were also tired from constant marching and fighting, and they would be facing a relatively fresh Russian army under the command of the German General Count von Bannigsen. The weather would also be a factor – Napoleon would later joke that he had discovered mud in Poland.

Following a fierce rearguard action by the Russians at Pułtusk, Napoleon believed the campaign was over and settled into winter quarters. His assumption seemed sound – what passed for roads in the region became impassable during the winter months, unless they were frozen solid. More often, they forced an army to trudge through knee-deep mud at a snail's pace (estimated rate of progress fell to as low as two kilometres per hour (1.25 miles per hour)).

The Russian handling of the war had been complicated by dissent between the two leading generals, Bannigsen and Friedrich Wilhelm von Buxhowden. The inconclusive Battle of Pułtusk put an end to that – Bannigsen claimed he had won a victory and was given overall command in early January 1807. His army was a curious

creature. The common Russian soldier was lacking in initiative but had a dedication to his duty that bordered on the heroic. The artillery wing was strong, but probably overly so, as the vast number of guns often proved a hindrance to the army's movement. Russian cavalry was generally excellent, with a large Cossack contingent promising to make life miserable for any enemy that broke and ran.

### Stalemate at Eylau

Napoleon's plans for a period of recuperation and resupply for his army were interrupted by a Russian offensive at the end of January. Surprised, Napoleon accepted the challenge, and the result was a brutal slogging match at Eylau between 7-8 February. Although a cavalry charge led by Joachim Murat stole the headlines, the real story was one of bitter fighting in impossible conditions, with a snowstorm blowing throughout the battle.

The late arrival of a corps of Prussians helped Bannigsen to hold the French at bay, but both sides suffered heavy casualties, with estimates ranging as high as 25,000 for both the French and Russians. The inconclusive battle was a check to Napoleon's reputation.

With both sides now too exhausted to continue operations, Napoleon got the time he needed to rest his men and also to complete the capture of Danzig, which fell on 24 May after a lengthy siege. Hostilities erupted again when the Russians nearly captured Marshal Michel Ney's VI Corps at the Battle of Guttstadt-Deppen, but Bannigsen was quickly forced to retreat when the massed French army swung into action. With the Russians taking up

**“THE COMMON RUSSIAN SOLDIER WAS LACKING IN INITIATIVE BUT HAD A DEDICATION TO HIS DUTY THAT BORDERED ON THE HEROIC”**

strong defensive positions at Heilsberg, they again fought the French to a standstill on 10 June, inflicting around 12,000 casualties and suffering half that number themselves.

Nevertheless, Bannigsen was forced to withdraw under the threat of superior French numbers. Moving towards Friedland as the campaign continued, the Russian commander was soon to make a fatal miscalculation.

### The killing fields

The terrain at Friedland has been described as "a gently undulating, open plain, with no qualities sufficient to impede the free movement of troops of all arms". This was broadly true, but there were geographical elements that would decisively shape the battle. First, the River Alle carved out a serpentine route north and south. There was a permanent bridge at Friedland itself and a number of fords, not all of which were known to the men who would be fighting on 14 June. Second, a smaller but still impassable river known as the Mill Stream ran roughly east and west, further dividing the battlefield. Third, a thickly wooded area, the Sortlack Wood, occupied the southwest section of the battlefield.

Bannigsen's army was on the east bank of the Alle when it spotted French troops on the opposite side. The French were part of a single corps under Marshal Jean Lannes. His men would hold the fate of the day in their hands.

Cavalry from Lannes's corps had been the first to arrive at Friedland. Russian magazines in the town were lightly guarded and the French soon evicted the defenders. The leading elements of the Russian army – cavalry under Prince Andrei Gallitzi – quickly retook the town.

At 8pm on 13 June, Bannigsen arrived and made his decision. Lannes's corps, he believed, was isolated and vulnerable, and he had time to cross the Alle in force, destroy the outnumbered French and withdraw at his leisure. To facilitate the crossing he ordered the construction of three pontoon bridges across the river, supplementing the existing permanent

*Slaughter on the banks of the Alle, as the Russians are forced to attempt an escape across the river*



Napoleon's Fourth Hussars, part of the Light Cavalry Brigade of Mortier's VIII Corps. This scene is a highly imagined depiction of events in the battle at Friedland

**"NAPOLEON'S APPROACH TO THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN LIKENED TO THE GERMAN TACTICS IN WORLD WAR II, HIS INTENTION BEING TO DESTROY THE PRUSSIAN ARMY BEFORE THE RUSSIANS COULD INTERVENE. THE RESULTS WERE STUNNING"**



To Königsberg

- |   |               |    |         |
|---|---------------|----|---------|
| X | Beaumont (I)  | XX | Grouchy |
| X | Colbert (VI)  | XX | Espagne |
| X | Fresin (VIII) |    |         |

**05 THE EMPEROR MAKES HIS PLANS**  
After arriving on the scene around midday, Napoleon quickly assesses the situation and realises that smashing the Russian left flank will prevent their retreat across the Alle. He awaits further reinforcements before setting his plan in motion.

**08 THE COUP DE GRACE**  
Having pummelled the main body of Russian troops with artillery, Napoleon finally unleashes the centre and left of his army, pushing many of the Russians into the Alle and securing a decisive victory. Only the inactivity of the French cavalry saves the Russians from even more serious casualties.

XXXX  
**NAPOLEON**  
(80.000)

**04 FRENCH REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE**  
Bennigsen's miscalculation becomes evident as massive numbers of French reinforcements begin to arrive. By 10am numbers are roughly equal, but the Russians are in a terrible position, with the Alle at their rear and insufficient bridges to withdraw easily.

XXX  
**VIII MORTIER**

XXX  
Res **LANNES**  
XX  
(+ Nansodly)

XX  
Lahoussoye  
XXX  
**I VICTOR (-)**

**03 FIGHTING IN THE WOODS**  
French voltigeurs and Russian jägers do battle in Sortlack Wood during the morning of 14 June. Lannes manages to confuse the Russians about his actual numbers while awaiting reinforcement.

**06 NEY MOVES ON FRIEDLAND**  
Marshal Ney, commanding VI Corps, moves towards Friedland, pushing back the Russians. Resistance is fierce and the assault bogs down, but timely support from Dupont gets the French moving again.

Gd **Bessieres**

XX  
**Dupont (I)**

XX  
**Bisson**

XXX  
**VI NEY**

XX  
**Latour-Maubourg**

**01 THE FRENCH ARRIVE AT FRIEDLAND**

Cavalry from Lannes's corps reach Friedland on the evening of 13 June and quickly scatter the small Russian guard, but they attract the attention of the main Russian army on the other side of the River Alle.

**02 CROSSING THE ALLE**

Believing Lannes is isolated, Bennigsen makes the decision to cross the Alle in force and attempt to wipe out the French corps. As well as using the existing bridge over the river, the Russians construct further pontoon bridges.

Map: Rocio Espin

bridge. While it would be enough to transfer his men across the Alle in good order, it would not be sufficient to act as an escape route for a routed army – but this eventuality had not occurred to Bennigsen.

Equally important, he found it impossible to cross his army quickly. After being funnelled over the bridges, the Russians had to squeeze through the narrow streets of Friedland and finally cross the Mill Stream on yet more hastily constructed pontoons. It slowed the army to a crawl when rapid movement was essential.

At his headquarters, Lannes began to receive intelligence from his retiring cavalry units and passed it on to Napoleon. The emperor responded quickly – he believed Bennigsen might be planning to cross the Alle in force, and urged Lannes to hold him there while more men were brought up. Lannes wasted no time in moving more units of his corps to Friedland to stall the Russian advance.

By 9am on 14 June, 46,000 Russian troops had crossed the Alle. Opposing them were just 9,000 infantry from Lannes's corps, along with around 8,000 cavalry. If Bennigsen moved quickly there was just a chance that he could overwhelm the smaller force and make good his withdrawal, but he either failed to see the urgency of the situation or misinterpreted the strength of Lannes's corps.

The French commander used the lie of the land to his advantage, with the high crops of wheat and rye serving to confuse Bennigsen, who may have believed that more French troops were concealed among them. Lannes also employed an unusually thick screen of skirmishers, which both covered his force effectively and may also have created an impression of greater numbers.

**Bennigsen enters the deathtrap**

Bennigsen's army was dangerously divided, with four divisions of infantry north of the Mill Stream and two south of it. The four pontoon bridges that had been built over this stream would be unable to handle an army in full retreat. Bennigsen had ponderously manoeuvred his men into a deathtrap.

Skirmishing and sometimes fiercer fighting was taking place in Sortlack Wood, where French light troops clashed with 3,000 Russian jägers. On the opposite side of the battlefield, Russian Cossacks attempted to get behind Lannes's position but were driven off by French cavalry.

The Russian army started its advance, but at almost the same moment, the first French

*Below, right: The German-born Count von Bennigsen was guilty of a monumental error of judgement at Friedland, cramming his Russian army into an untenable position*

*Below: Michel Ney's VI Corps was handed the key role in the attack at Friedland, crushing the isolated Russian left wing*



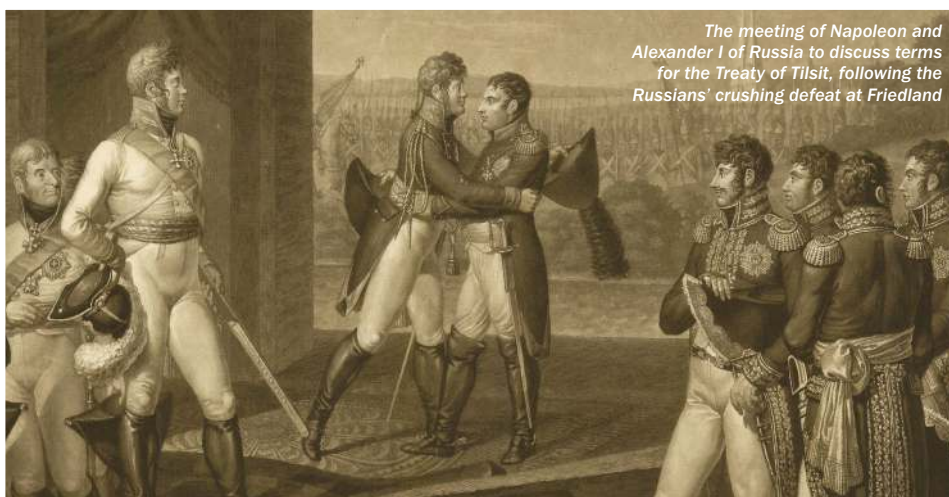
reinforcements began to arrive. A division of dragoons under Emmanuel de Grouchy and the French and Polish troops of Marshal Mortier's VIII Corps started to reach the battlefield, upping French numbers to around 30,000. It was enough to check the Russian advance, and there was already a grim inevitability about the outcome of the battle. Bennigsen, still with around 20,000 men on the right bank of the Alle, simply could not transfer his army across the river quickly enough, and the growing French numbers on the opposite bank were ominous. Beginning to fear the worst, a body of 6,000 men was sent to secure a potential line of retreat.

While the campaign would be best remembered for the terrible conditions endured at Eylau, the battlefield of Friedland was no easier on the troops. The temperature soared to over 30 degrees Celsius as the exhausted Russians stood and waited for orders. A half-hearted artillery exchange would be the only military action for several hours, as Bennigsen appeared paralysed by his dilemma. By 10am battlefield numbers were approaching parity, and two hours later Napoleon arrived at the scene. From the high ground three kilometres (two miles) outside Friedland he was able to survey the battlefield. Already buoyed by the fact that 14 June was the anniversary of the Battle of Marengo, the emperor's spirits rose again when he saw the position of the Russian army. Surprised at Bennigsen's level of commitment, he appeared nonplussed that battle was being offered on such terrible terms for the Russians: "The enemy," he noted, "appears to be seriously meditating the battle which is about to commence."

Napoleon quickly recognised that the two divisions isolated south of the Mill Stream should be the focus of his assault. Crack them, and the left flank of the main body of Russians would be fatally exposed. He also saw that there was no rush. Bennigsen could not hope to extricate his army now, and the French could bide their time until more units arrived to give them overwhelming numerical superiority. While he waited, Napoleon prepared his battle orders.

The plan was simple: the French army would pivot on its left flank, commanded by Mortier, with the right and centre moving against the Russians. The right, which Michel Ney would command, was to be the critical area of the battlefield, smashing the two divisions south of the Mill Stream. The French cavalry was massed on the left, and the orders were ominous. Napoleon instructed that "the cavalry will manoeuvre so as to cause as much harm as possible to the enemy when he, pressed by the vigorous attack of our right, shall feel the necessity of retreat."

Bennigsen was already feeling the necessity of retreat, but only darkness could give him such an opportunity. At 4pm the French Imperial Guard arrived, along with the corps of General Victor-Perrin, and the French now numbered around 80,000, although only around 60,000 would be engaged.



*The meeting of Napoleon and Alexander I of Russia to discuss terms for the Treaty of Tilsit, following the Russians' crushing defeat at Friedland*

### The assault begins

The delay while awaiting reinforcements had momentarily given Bennigsen hope. Even among the French, most believed the battle would not be fought until the following day and the Russian commander would be able to attempt an extrication of his men under the cover of darkness. At 5.30pm such comforting musings were interrupted by three signal shots from a battery of 20 French cannons. The assault on the Russians had begun.

The massed French artillery suddenly erupted in earnest. In the centre and right of the Russian line there was no option but to stand and endure the punishment. Advancing against such superior numbers was impossible, as was withdrawing with the river at their back. Only by breaking and running could the Russian soldiers have any hope of escape, and even then the waiting French cavalry promised to inflict more misery.

The Russian left, cut off by the Mill Stream, found itself the focus of the French assault. Ney had strict instructions to move straight towards the town of Friedland, making no diversion from his course. His three divisions moved forward, with Marchand commanding the right division, Bisson the left and Latour-Maubourg the third division, tucked in behind as a reserve.

Russian skirmishers were quickly pushed back towards the town, but Marchand deviated from his line and veered to the right in pursuit, opening a gap between his men and those of Bisson. Spotting an opportunity to disrupt the advance, Russian cavalry under Kollagibov poured into the gap. Taking heavy fire from both sides, as well as from the reserve division, which moved to plug the gap, the Russian attack faltered and French cavalry sent it reeling back.

The Russians now found themselves squeezed into a tight angle, their ranks becoming disorganised and condensed as space ran out. Into the huddled mass of men the French artillery threw case shot, which was brutally effective against such a concentrated mass of men and horses.

Russian artillery posted on the opposite bank of the river was able to inflict casualties on the

advancing French, however, and as they drew nearer, the French in turn started to receive case shot. Marchand's division began to slow, and a charge by the Russian reserve cavalry halted the French offensive.

With ample reserves to call upon, the French were able to quickly retake the initiative. Without requiring orders, Dupont's division of Victor-Perrin's reserve corps advanced and the Russians were pressed back. Most telling was the contribution by a battery of 38 guns, which repeatedly fired into the Russians, advanced to closer range, and fired again. Eventually just 55 metres (60 yards) from the Russians, the damage inflicted by case shot was appalling.

### Burning the bridges

Dupont's men were then able to cross the Mill Stream to threaten the left flank of the Russian centre, while Ney's troops entered Friedland itself, which became the scene of savage street fighting. By 7.30pm fire was added to the horrors endured by troops of both sides, the Russian guns on the opposite bank of the

*Napoleon salutes his army outside Friedland. The battle brought the Fourth Coalition to an end, but his men would not be able to rest for long*



**"THE RUSSIANS NOW FOUND THEMSELVES SQUEEZED INTO A TIGHT ANGLE, THEIR RANKS BECOMING DISORGANISED AND CONDENSED"**

Alle having set several houses near to the river alight. Cruelly for the Russians, this fire spread to the pontoon bridges, which were quickly unusable, making escape almost impossible (some sources claim retreating Russian troops set fire to the bridges deliberately to prevent the French from pursuing). Russian soldiers began to try their luck at swimming across the river, but many would drown before reaching the other side.

French officers later wrote of the tremendous bravery of the Russian soldiers, many of whom simply stood in their ranks accepting case shot and musket fire and, eventually, French bayonets. Bravery could not turn the tide of the one-sided battle, however.

Seeing the burning bridges across the Alle, Gorchakov, commanding the Russian centre, knew that recapturing Friedland was the only hope of securing any sort of escape route. He sent two divisions of his infantry to retake Friedland, but they could only briefly dispute ownership of the town. Forced out again by Ney's troops, they continued up the left bank of the river, searching for a crossing point while hounded by French infantry, artillery and cavalry. The tangled, confused mass of men made it impossible for Russian batteries on the opposite bank of the river to offer support. Finally, at Kloschenen, a deep ford was found, which allowed many men and even some of Bennigsen's artillery to cross the river and reach safety.

In the centre of the Russian line, bodies were neatly arranged in ranks where French artillery fire had mown them down. Having endured the punishment for hours, the Russians continued to resist even when Napoleon unleashed the bulk of his army to sweep them from the field. Pushed relentlessly back, many more Russians drowned in the Alle, while a few managed to cross. The bulk of the Russian cavalry managed to escape along the left bank of the Alle, by way of Allenburg.

## **"WITH A PEACE TREATY WITH RUSSIA AT THE FRONT OF HIS MIND, A COLD-HEARTED PURSUIT MIGHT HAVE INFLAMED RUSSIAN PASSIONS TO PROLONG THE STRUGGLE"**

Napoleon had secured a crushing victory, with Russian losses estimated at around 20,000. It could have been worse for Bennigsen had the French cavalry not remained inert at the close of the battle. Napoleon had been displeased with his cavalry at Heilsberg, commenting, "They did nothing I ordered". At Friedland they did nothing at all, later claiming they had received no explicit orders. The confusion of the Russian retreat should have made orders unnecessary, and Napoleon had clearly stated that the cavalry should be ready to "cause as much harm as possible to the enemy" if and when they retreated.

### **Peace with Russia**

The French pursuit the following day was also half-hearted. The main bridge over the Alle, although damaged by fire, was still passable, and cavalry units crossed on the morning of 15 June. However, Bennigsen was able to withdraw his shattered army to relative safety.

Reasons put forward for the lack of pursuit of the Russians include the possibility that Napoleon did not wish to inflict too severe a beating upon Bennigsen. With a peace treaty with Russia at the front of his mind, a cold-hearted pursuit might have inflamed Russian passions to prolong the struggle. Whatever the reason, some French officers grumbled of a battle gained but a victory lost.

Whether or not Napoleon had been playing a political game, the Russians were brought to the negotiating table by their catastrophic defeat. At Tilsit the two emperors met, and Alexander I reportedly got negotiations off to a good start by saying, "I hate the English as much as you do." Napoleon wanted the Russians to join the Continental System – the blockade intended to cripple Britain's economy – and Alexander had little option. The terms dictated by the French were notable for their leniency, and France even agreed to assist Russia in its struggle with the Ottoman Empire.

The same leniency did not extend to the defeated Prussians, who must have regretted finally entering the wars against Napoleon. The Prussians lost around half of their territory in a treaty signed two days after the one between France and Russia. Prussia was also saddled with crippling tribute payments initially as high as 154.5 million francs, although that number was soon revised downwards.

Inevitably, the defeats of Prussia and Russia ended the War of the Fourth Coalition. However, although Napoleon had earned himself some breathing room, his new allies were to prove unreliable. Franco-Russian relations would break down by 1810, when it became clear the Russians were not enforcing the Continental System. In 1812, when Napoleon made his own great miscalculation by crossing the River Nemen, Russia would extract revenge for its humiliation in 1807.

### **FURTHER READING**

- ★ **NAPOLÉON'S POLISH GAMBLE EYLAU & FRIEDLAND 1807, CHRISTOPHER SUMMERVILLE**
- ★ **FROM EYLAU TO FRIEDLAND (GREAT BATTLES OF THE FIRST EMPIRE) F.G. HOURTOULLE**
- ★ **ILLUSTRATED BATTLES OF THE NAPOLEONIC AGE VOLUME 2 ARTHUR GRIFFITHS**



Images: Rocio Espin, Getty

# WARSAW RISES

WORDS MARIANNA BUKOWSKI

*Below: Four and a half hours of film recorded during the Warsaw Uprising has survived, giving a unique insight into the lives of soldiers and civilians in the fight for the city*



Home Army soldiers, using a pistol and a Blyskawica sub-machine gun, fight the German forces on the streets of Warsaw



At 5pm on 1 August 1944, Europe's largest underground resistance, The Polish Home Army, rose up against the Germans. Men, women and children fought to liberate Warsaw

**I**n Poland the subject of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 is seen from many different perspectives and, like all battles, has its own specific circumstances: military, political, social and – seen from Poland's history of uprisings – cultural. Yet, while no longer suppressed, as it was in the years of communism and Cold War, it still remains a battle relatively unknown outside of Poland today.

Fought from 1 August-2 October 1944, the outcome of the 63-day battle is a tragedy. An estimated 18,000 Polish insurgents lost their lives and between 180,000-200,000 civilians died during the uprising. Warsaw became a city of ruins. However, despite the catastrophic end, it is also a story of tragic beauty, heroism and fierce resistance against the odds.

### A history of uprisings

With the German and Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939, Polish resistance to the occupiers was instant. Poland had only relatively recently regained its independence at the end of World War I, following 123 years of Russian, Prussian and Austrian partitions, and building underground secret networks against an enemy occupier was something of a second nature. Generations of Poles had fought for independence – in the Kosciuszko Rising in 1794, with Napoleon for the Duchy of Warsaw from 1807-1815, the November Uprising of 1830, the January Uprising of 1863 and in Piłsudski's Legions in WWI, all fighting for the rebirth of the Polish state.

By 1940 Poland's armed resistance movement had formed as the Związek Walki Zbrojnej (Union of Armed Struggle) and developed into the Armia Krajowa (AK or Home Army) in 1942 – the biggest underground army in occupied Europe. By 1944 an estimated 400,000 soldiers carried out military training, diversionary activities, sabotage operations and intelligence gathering in preparation for an armed national insurgency.

## Occupation

The occupation in Warsaw, Poland's capital city with around 1.3 million inhabitants in 1939, was particularly brutal from the very start. Germans confiscated property, renamed streets and put up "Nur für Deutsche" (only for Germans) signs across the city. Every citizen was forced to carry their 'kennkarte' ID card, work and residence permits to show any German official on patrol at any given time.

The German authorities imposed strict food rationing. The average adult in Warsaw lost ten kilograms in weight during the occupation. Monetary depreciation meant loss of any pre-war savings and disproportionately low wages, creating an extortionate black market. Mass arrests and executions of civil servants, doctors, teachers, lawyers, scientists and artists increased and continued throughout the occupation, such as the massacres at Wawer, 1939, Palmiry, 1939/1940, Kabacki Forest, 1939/1940, and Sekocinski Forest in 1942.

From October 1941, under the penalty of death, Jews were no longer allowed to leave the Warsaw Ghetto. Helping or hiding Jews was also punishable by death, not only for the one responsible, but also for their entire family. Despite this, many still offered any assistance they could. In 1942 Jan Karski delivered an impassioned plea on behalf of Poland's Jews to Allied officials in London and to American President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1943 the remaining Jewish population revolted in the heroic but doomed Ghetto Uprising.

In the autumn of 1943 SS-Brigadeführer Franz Kutschera, head of the SS and police in Warsaw, introduced public street executions. The police were allowed to kill anyone at will, on the spot. Round-ups, mass executions and forced deportations as slave labour to Germany became so frequent that when someone left their house, they would not know if they would ever come back.

It is impossible for anyone that has not lived through it to understand what it really means to live in constant fear of arrest, torture and death. This terror created a strong unity against the Germans, and sometimes with total strangers, when a glance, a word or some small gesture from someone that just happened to pass on the street could save a stranger's life.

## Class of 1920

Many of the young soldiers that would come to fight in the uprising of 1944 were born in the 1920s, and are known in Poland as the 'Class of 1920'. Born free in the Second Polish Republic, they felt a strong sense of patriotic duty and civic engagement, and as they came of age during the brutality of the occupation, they felt it was their responsibility to fight for Poland's freedom.

As German authorities closed all secondary schools and universities, forbidding Polish history, geography and literature to be taught, teachers took up the struggle against the occupier by providing clandestine study groups. It is estimated that 90,000 students attended these secret schools held in private homes, taught by about 5,500 teachers in 1943-1944.

From a young age many joined the 'Grey Ranks' and were very active in the scout

movement, learning first-aid skills and military drills. Teenagers spent their free time on conspiratorial activities and small-scale sabotage. Painting the anchor symbol of 'Poland Fighting' on a wall of a house or busy street was very dangerous but boosted morale immensely in the fight against the occupiers.

The iconic PW anchor symbol for "Polska Walczaca" (Poland Fighting) was designed by Anna Smolenska, a scout and arts history student who would perish in Auschwitz in 1943.

Commanded by Brigadier General Emil August Fieldorf 'Nil' (Nile), the Home Army's Directorate of Diversionary Operations, The KEDYW, consisted of elite units and undertook all manner of diversionary and sabotage activities, such as train derailment, arson, blowing up bridges, planting bombs in SS barracks, sabotage work at German factories and freeing prisoners held by the Gestapo.

One of the KEDYW's special units, named 'Agat' (Anti-Gestapo), and later 'Pegaz' and 'Parasol', carried out the assassinations of exceptionally brutal Nazi officials. The first successful liquidation was of the sadistic deputy commandant of Pawiak prison, SS-Oberscharführer Franz Bürkl, in September 1943. The Sten gun used to kill Bürkl was carried to the location in a specially constructed violin case. One of the assassins, Bronisław Pietraszkiewicz, pseudonym 'Lot' (Flight), was to become the leader of 'Operation Kutschera', assassinating SS-Brigadeführer Franz Kutschera in February 1944. Similar to the better known killing of Reinhard Heydrich in Prague, Kutschera died on location. Just as the mass reprisal killings in Lidice had followed Heydrich's death, 300 people were shot in Warsaw by the

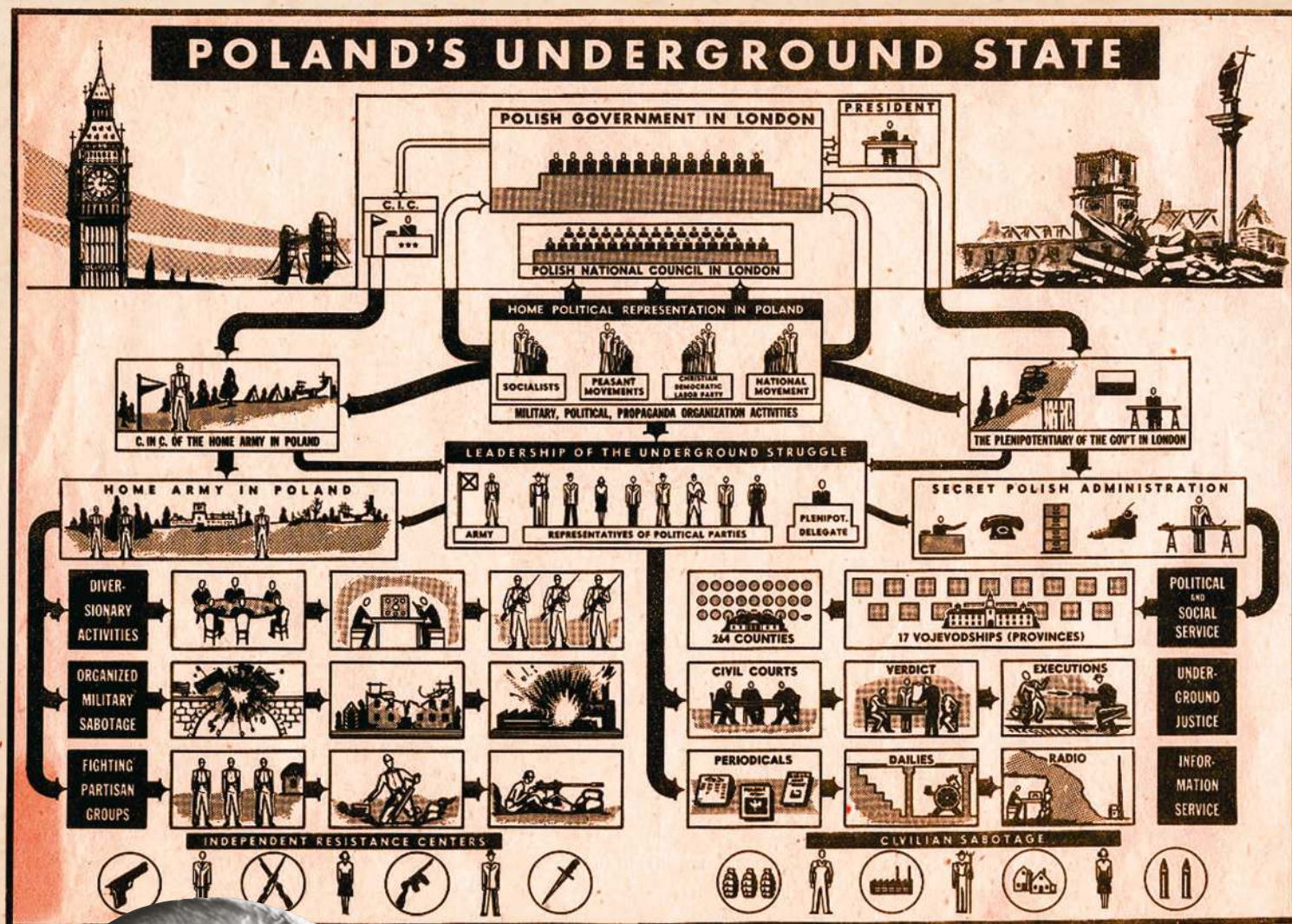


**"AS THEY CAME OF AGE DURING THE BRUTALITY OF THE OCCUPATION, THEY FELT IT WAS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIGHT FOR POLAND'S FREEDOM"**

Left: Wanda Traczyk-Stawska, outside the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust in London, holding a copy of the film 'Portrait of a Soldier'



17-year-old Wanda Traczyk-Stawska, firing her 'Błyskawica' gun during the uprising



Above: Structure of the Polish underground state and its relationship to the government-in-exile based in London

## GOVERNING IN EXILE AND SECRET

AS GERMANY AND THE USSR OCCUPIED POLAND'S TERRITORIES, THE POLISH STATE LIVED ON IN SECRET, GOVERNED BY THE POLISH GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE

Recognised by the western Allies, The Polish president, government and commander-in-chief at first held office in Paris, then, after the fall of France in 1940, in London.

Formed under Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief General Sikorski, Poland's armed resistance movement was organised as ZWZ Union of Armed Struggle in 1940. It became the AK Home Army in 1942 – the biggest underground army in occupied Europe. By 1944 an estimated 400,000 soldiers carried out military training, diversionary activities, sabotage operations and intelligence gathering in preparation for an armed national insurgency.

In Poland, the plenipotentiary delegate to the government in London held the

highest authority, directing all clandestine civil administration. This included the judicial system, with courts that conducted trials and passed verdicts, including death penalties for traitors and collaborators. Clandestine radio stations informed the West of events in Poland.

Underground printing presses published newspapers and leaflets, providing vital information and helped to keep up morale. Over 700 press titles were published during the occupation. As German authorities closed all secondary schools and universities, teachers took up the struggle against the occupiers by providing clandestine study groups. Many teenagers were also active in the scout movement, learning skills that would prove vital for a chance of survival before the war's end.

**"BY 1944 AN ESTIMATED 400,000 SOLDIERS CARRIED OUT MILITARY TRAINING, DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITIES, SABOTAGE OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING IN PREPARATION FOR AN ARMED NATIONAL INSURGENCY"**

Władysław Sikorski was prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile, until his death in 1943

Germans in reprisal for the Poles' assassination of Kutschera.

Escaping after the action, one of the cars used by the assassins ran into a German checkpoint at the Vistula bridge, and two of the assassins jumped over the balustrade into the freezing Vistula River. 'Lot' escaped in a second car, but having been wounded during the action, he died later, after surgery, from his wounds. He was only 22 years old.

### W-hour

By June 1944 the Russian offensive in Poland had started, this time on the side of the Allies. The Germans were in retreat and had begun to evacuate Warsaw. Reports were coming in that the Red Army was approaching the Vistula from the eastern suburbs of Warsaw. While diplomatic relations between Poland and the Soviets had not been re-established since the Katyn massacre, where 22,000 Polish POWs had been executed by the NKVD, Home Army Commander General 'Bor' Komorowski was convinced the Soviet attack was continuing towards Germany.

After consulting with the government delegate Jan 'Sobol' Jankowski, he decided to start the uprising to liberate the capital, therefore safeguarding the sovereignty of the Polish state before the Red Army entered. In the words of Jankowski, "We wanted to be free and owe our freedom to nobody."

'W-hour' was set for 5.00pm on Tuesday 1 August 1944. The uprising was expected to last three days, or a week at most. Victory was all but certain. Most Varsovians welcomed the Warsaw Uprising with enthusiasm – for the first time in five years of occupation they had a chance to be free. "We were ready to give absolutely everything for freedom," said Wanda Traczyk-Stawska, a 17-year-old girl scout.

Many of the scout groups and units that had formed during the occupation became some of the most famous formations of the rising: Battalion Zoska, Parasol, Koszta, Odwet. With many soldiers being so young, between 16-24 years old, the bonds they forged would last for life. Many would choose heroic-sounding or mythological noms de guerre, but some would be nicknamed by their friends. The boys in Traczyk-Stawska's unit named her "Paczek", meaning rosebud or doughnut. Another characteristic of the uprising was that boys and girls would fight together, side by side.

Traczyk-Stawska would become one of the women who took up arms against the enemy and fought as a soldier in a unit under the direct disposition of General Antoni Chrusciel, whose nom de guerre was 'Monter' and was in command of all the fighting forces in Warsaw.

According to Bór-Komorowski, the Home Army strength amounted to nearly 40,000 underground soldiers in Warsaw. Today it's estimated that on 1 August 25,000 soldiers took up the struggle and, as more joined in, the number would rise to nearly 50,000. However, only around ten per cent of them had guns. Every

imaginable weapon that could be found was used. One of the most recognised guns of the rising is the 9mm sub-machine gun 'Błyskawica', meaning 'lightning', that was designed by Polish engineers and assembled in underground workshops. Much would depend on taking weapons off the enemy and on the supply of ammunition, of which there was a great shortage from the start.

In comparison, at the time of the outbreak of the rising, the German garrison in Warsaw had almost 20,000 well-armed and highly trained soldiers, yet at first the Germans sustained heavy losses.

### Soldiers of the resistance

A Home Army soldier's uniform was a red and white armband. Although the uprising started in the summer heat of August, those who were able to prepare, dressed in what suitably durable clothing they had. Many soldiers wore a mixture of civilian and any military clothing that they could find, making each soldier's uniform rather individual and unique. But as the battle went on civilian clothing tore and wore out fast.

When the Home Army secured larger areas they also took over German warehouses and storage facilities, and so large quantities of German uniforms came into their possession, which they would use. Any soldier will attest to the importance of wearing boots and a helmet, as well as clothes with pockets and belts in battle. German belts with an eagle swastika on the buckle were worn upside down. Photographs of young smiling nurses and couriers wearing Waffen-SS camouflage anoraks over summer dresses and sandals create a striking contrast.

Ask any veteran soldier, and they will likely say that the bravest in battle were the nurses and first-aid girls. They would run straight into the raging battlefield with stretchers, and under fire from Germans they would try to save the lives not only of Polish soldiers but also of severely wounded Germans.

Couriers and liaison girls were vital in coordinating information between different units, which was exceptionally dangerous, as it meant having to run through enemy territory to do so. Unarmed due to the lack of weapons, they had no guns to protect themselves – when captured, they would often be raped before they were executed.

Adam Borkiewicz was the first historian of the uprising. In the opening lines of his book are the now legendary last words of courier Maria Comer, who upon capture was asked, "Bist du Banditin?" (are you a bandit?), to which she replied, "I am a soldier of the Home Army", before she was executed on the spot.

Recognised by the Allies as a combat force, the Home Army was protected under the Geneva Convention. Yet the Germans killed Home Army soldiers as "bandits and terrorists", and consistently broke the rules of war with the continuous mass murder of civilians.



German captives, made to wear marked uniforms by Polish resistance fighters

**"ONE OF THE MOST RECOGNISED GUNS OF THE RISING IS THE 9MM SUB-MACHINE GUN 'BŁYSKAWICA', MEANING 'LIGHTNING', THAT WAS DESIGNED BY POLISH ENGINEERS AND ASSEMBLED IN UNDERGROUND WORKSHOPS"**



Left: The 'Lightning' 9mm sub-machine gun is one of the most famous weapons of the uprising. It was designed by Polish engineers and manufactured in underground workshops

Home Army soldiers relied on captured weapons, vehicles and ammunition. Here, they can be seen in a captured Sd.Kfz 251 vehicle



*Members of the  
Zoska battalion.  
The armband  
marking the Home  
Army fighters can  
clearly be seen*



**“THE GERMANS KILLED HOME ARMY  
SOLDIERS AS ‘BANDITS AND TERRORISTS’,  
AND CONSISTENTLY BROKE THE RULES  
OF WAR WITH THE CONTINUOUS MASS  
MURDER OF CIVILIANS”**



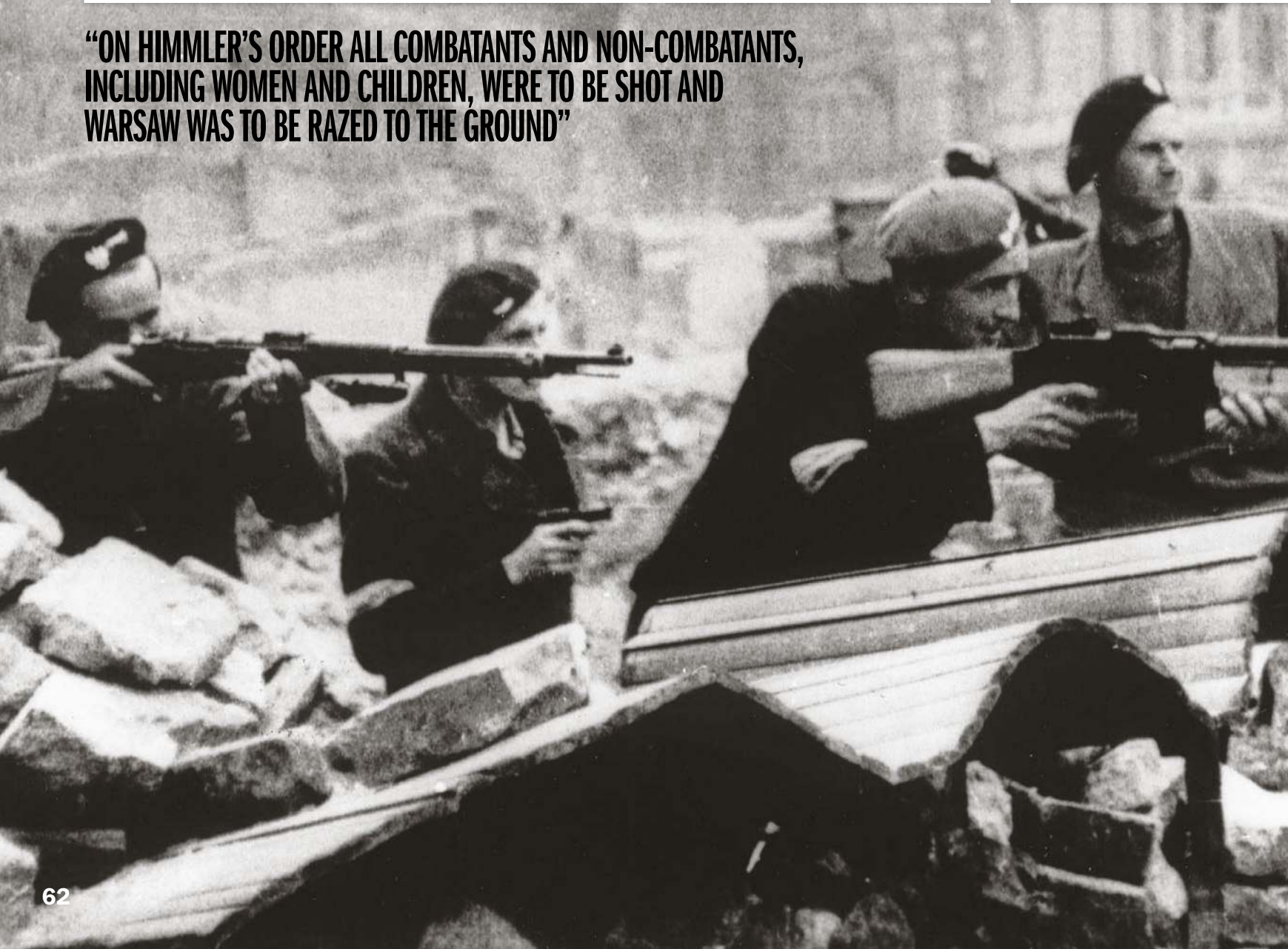
*The Home Army was at a serious disadvantage in terms of weapons and supplies, and used whatever they could find during the uprising. But they showed great determination to free themselves after years of German occupation*



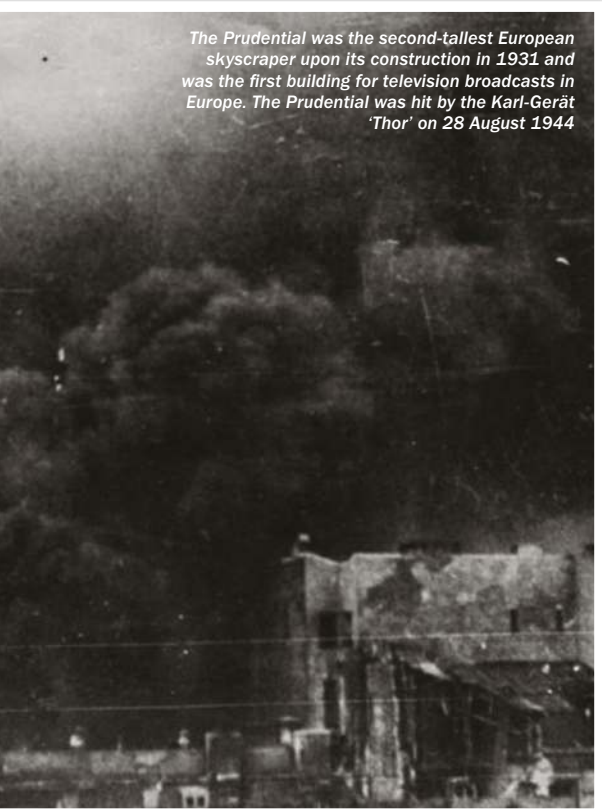
Barricades were built with anything that could be used



**“ON HIMMLER’S ORDER ALL COMBATANTS AND NON-COMBATANTS, INCLUDING WOMEN AND CHILDREN, WERE TO BE SHOT AND WARSAW WAS TO BE RAZED TO THE GROUND”**



The Prudential was the second-tallest European skyscraper upon its construction in 1931 and was the first building for television broadcasts in Europe. The Prudential was hit by the Karl-Gerät 'Thor' on 28 August 1944



Members of the Home Army fight among the ruins of Warsaw during the uprising



## Civilian frontline

As news of the Warsaw Uprising reached Himmler, he appointed the command in Warsaw to Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, chief of German anti-partisan formations. On Himmler's order all combatants and non-combatants, including women and children, were to be shot and Warsaw was to be razed to the ground.

Under the command of SS Gruppenführer Reinefarth, the notorious RONA brigades of Kaminski and Dirlewanger started the assault on the Warsaw neighbourhoods of Ochota and Wola on 5 August. When they advanced, they would use women and children as 'human shields' in front of their tanks. As mass rape and systematic murder of civilians continued, during the course of a few days over 40,000 civilians were slaughtered.

The mass killings in Ochota and Wola count among the worst atrocities of the war. This only reinforced the Home Army soldiers' belief that now the rising had started, there was no turning back – it was a battle to the end. Every street, every house was fought for.

The Germans used heavy rocket launchers, which civilians nicknamed 'cows' due to the moaning sound they made when the missiles were launched. People caught in their range as they exploded became 'living torches' coated in flammable liquid. Another terrifying German weapon was the so-called 'Goliath', a small remote-controlled tank filled with explosives.

Many civilians lived in basements throughout the uprising and only went out on street level when absolutely necessary, moving through underground passages and basement tunnels created by demolishing the walls between cellars. The longer the rising went on, the harder their situation became.

At times, in certain areas, the relationship between the civilian population and Home Army soldiers became understandably strained. Nevertheless, they held out. The truth is that without the support of the civilian population the uprising could not have continued. It was the civilians that helped to set up and worked in hospitals treating the wounded, built barricades, cooked food and collected water, they put out fires and provided shelter for soldiers. It was with their help that the battle could continue.

## Battlefield Warsaw

The insurgents adopted defensive tactics and achieved significant success in the city centre, capturing the PAST state telephone company building, the Holy Cross Church and the police headquarters. They also mounted offensive actions in the Żoliborz area, attempted assaults on the railway station and tried to establish a link between the city centre and the old town area. Unfortunately, these attempts proved unsuccessful and became some of the bloodiest battles of the uprising.

The insurgents ultimately failed to capture the most essential military targets and were locked

in an uneven battle against continuous German reinforcements of heavy weapons, systematically destroying buildings and Polish positions with artillery fire supported by air raids.

The Germans systematically killed civilians following any retreat by the Home Army. Knowing that civilians would be murdered once the Home Army had been forced to abandon its positions was the absolute worst times of the uprising, said Traczyk-Stawska: "A soldier, when he is firing, when he is in battle, he does not feel pain even when he is wounded," she said. "Pain comes later, and even when a soldier is dying, then that death is a very different situation – compared to civilians, who suffer much worse deaths than soldiers. A soldier has a different mindset. He is armed. He is fighting. He is in a state of euphoria and the adrenaline is very high. But civilians... they were dragged out and executed... defenceless." The suffering of civilians is something that Wanda Traczyk-Stawska thinks about constantly, to this day.

Home Army soldiers were a motley crew. One soldier in Traczyk-Stawska's unit, 'Kruczek', forever the avid reader, would crawl along a torn barricade on his back, his jacket bulging up, filled with books that he had found along the way in some bombed out, abandoned buildings. Another soldier in their unit was unwilling to be separated from his wife and child, and brought them along with him – crawling through the torn barricade, the wife would carry their wrapped up new-born baby in her mouth, like a lioness. Scenes like this would seem improbable in a film, and yet in real life they happened. The Warsaw Uprising was filled with many surreal or miracle-like experiences.

## The fall

After fierce fighting, the German units captured the last defences of the old town on 2 September. With the fall of the old town, no single building was left standing, and the conditions of the insurgents worsened with each day. The catastrophe forced Colonel Karol Ziemski to begin an evacuation. Every attempt to break through the German lines and connect with the city centre had failed, and the only way out of the siege was through the sewer tunnels. The municipal sewer system ran under most of the city and had been used by couriers throughout the uprising. The conditions in the sewers were very difficult: insurgents waded in darkness through toxic waste, with the risk of Germans hearing them from above and releasing poison gas or explosives into the tunnels. It took around four hours to cover two kilometres.

For two days, over 5,000 insurgents escaped through the sewers. On 2 September the last Home Army units left the old town. Behind them they left some 40,000-50,000 civilians. The old, sick and wounded were shot by the Germans, and the rest were transported to Mauthausen and Sachsenhausen.

This is one of the most tragic chapters of the uprising. The fall of the old town also prevented

**"THE CONDITIONS IN THE SEWERS WERE VERY DIFFICULT: INSURGENTS WADED IN DARKNESS THROUGH TOXIC WASTE, WITH THE RISK OF GERMANS HEARING THEM"**

the city centre insurgents from connecting with units in Żoliborz and Kampinos Forest, and allowed German forces to concentrate on suppressing each individual stronghold of resistance. Despite the insurgents' great determination, the Germans had an overwhelming advantage, both in manpower and military resources. The Karl-Gerät 040 siege gun caused huge devastation, along with shelling by German artillery and the Luftwaffe, which made nearly 1,400 sorties over Warsaw, fighting the insurgents and destroying the city.

In the end, all the insurgents could do was to hold onto their positions. With time the conflict reached a virtual stalemate. Despite the brave efforts of Allied airmen, the Warsaw Airlift had not been successful. The route from Italy was too difficult, and by the time some airdrops were conducted most supplies fell into enemy hands. Churchill couldn't persuade Stalin to give Allied flights landing rights in the USSR to help get supplies and ammunition to the insurgents in time. Western assistance had failed. The conditions for civilians became unbearable and the Home Army had no resources left with which to fight. The situation was unsustainable. It is still remarkable that the rising lasted for as long as it did – 63 days.

### Capitulation

The last shot of the uprising was fired on 2 October. In the final capitulation terms, agreed between representatives of the Home Army command and Van dem Bach, Home Army soldiers were to be treated as POWs according to the Geneva Convention. Civilians were not to be killed or persecuted.

Around 11,600 Home Army soldiers surrendered, along with about 2,000 women. Wanda Traczyk-Stawska was one of the 1,800 women that would end up as a POW in Stalag VI-C Oberlangen, where in a beautiful twist of fate, they would later be liberated by The Polish First Armoured Division led by General Maczek.

Elsewhere, many Home Army soldiers would be freed or escape German captivity and continue to fight before the war's end.

The mass evacuation of the civilian population from Warsaw, which the Germans insisted upon, is an unprecedented event in Europe's history and remains one of the most tragic and haunting scenes of the war. First taken to a transit camp, in contradiction to the capitulation agreement, over 100,000 Varsovians were sent as slave labour to Germany, and tens of thousands were sent to concentration camps, including Mauthausen, Ravensbrück and Auschwitz. The exact number of people who perished in the uprising will remain unknown.

An estimated 18,000 Polish insurgents lost their lives, while German deaths are estimated to be similar. It was the civilians that suffered the most incomprehensible loss: Between 180,000-200,000 civilians died during the 63 days of battle. At the Warsaw Insurgents Cemetery in Wola, over 100,000 people are buried, most in mass graves.

### The landscape after battle

For the three months that followed, the demolition of Warsaw was done methodically, house by house, on Hitler's orders. Around 85-90 per cent of Warsaw was destroyed.

As the Red Army finally entered Warsaw in January 1945 they 'liberated' a pile of rubble. In their wake, the NKVD arriving from the east had been disarming and arresting Polish insurgents all along. Many of the labour and concentration camps established under German occupation retained similar

functions under the new Soviet occupiers. Poland's borders were changed and fell under the Soviet sphere of influence. The legitimate Polish Government-in-Exile in London didn't return to Poland, where Stalin had a Soviet-friendly government installed.

The geopolitical landscape had changed – the rest of the world moved on. However, some Polish soldiers continued to fight, joining WiN and different partisan groups in forests. From a more academic point of view, fighting at this stage may seem irrational, if not suicidal, but it had an emotional logic. In Poland, one occupying force had simply been replaced by another. Some describe this period as a civil war. The last of the 'doomed soldiers', Józef Franczak, was killed in 1963.

Even those who tried to rebuild or start 'normal' civilian lives were rarely able to do so: the majority of Home Army soldiers were persecuted and imprisoned at some point, and many were executed in the years of Stalinist repression that followed. Polish soldiers returning from the West did so at their own peril, and they too were often arrested and prosecuted as 'traitors'.

Reading about the lives and profoundly unjust fates of Emil 'Nil' Fieldorf, executed in 1953, or Captain Witold Pilecki, executed in 1948, and so many others, is heartbreaking. But in the years that would follow, speaking publicly about the Warsaw Uprising was not allowed. "Not a word about the rising. Not a word about the Home Army. As if we never existed," Wanda Traczyk-Stawska recalled. Only with the fall of communism did this change. In Poland today, the rising it is a subject of constant, passionate debate and public discourse, yet it still remains relatively unknown in the West.

The Warsaw Uprising and its aftermath remains not only crucial to understanding WWII and Poland today, but is also part of our shared European history: it is the story of the Allies who fought for freedom – and lost.

Images: Alamy

**"THE EXACT NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO PERISHED IN THE UPRISING WILL REMAIN UNKNOWN"**



*The Warsaw Uprising involved many combatants, including women and children. These Polish boys participated in the fighting*

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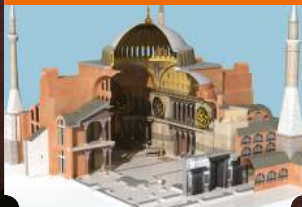
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# NORTH AMERICAN P-51 MUSTANG

Despite an unpromising start, the Mustang became a world-class fighter and the aircraft that destroyed the Luftwaffe

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

*The North American P-51D is widely considered to be the definitive version of the Mustang*

**T**he P-51 Mustang is one of the greatest fighter aircraft of all time and played a definitive role in winning the air battle over Europe during World War II.

The initial models with Allison engines had poor high-level performance but excellent lower-level characteristics. When it first entered service with the RAF in January 1942, the Mustang was used mainly for photo-reconnaissance sorties, which rapidly evolved to include ground-attack sweeps.

Meanwhile, the USAAF became interested in the P-51. As the USAAF doctrine of self-defending bombers was proven unsound, it looked for a long-range escort fighter. The Allison-engined P-51A would not do, but the new P-51B, with a Merlin engine and

drop-tanks fitted the bill perfectly, and large numbers were ordered. These arrived with the Eighth Air Force in the UK in December 1943. In January 1944 Mustangs made their first sortie over Germany, and in March operated for the first time over Berlin. The improved P-51D became the Eighth Air Force's primary fighter in 1944. From close bomber escort work they expanded into 'sweeps' across Germany and occupied Europe, systematically destroying the Luftwaffe in the air and on the ground. The P-51 would destroy more German aircraft than any other Allied fighter, and over 250 USAAF pilots scored five or more victories while flying the Mustang.

The P-51 played a lesser role in the Far East, although it was used by the Chinese Nationalists, and in 1945 flew escort operations for USAAF B-29 Superfortresses over Japan.



"THE P-51 WOULD CLAIM MORE  
GERMAN AIRCRAFT DESTROYED  
THAN ANY OTHER ALLIED FIGHTER"

## NORTH AMERICAN P-51D MUSTANG

**COMMISSIONED:** 1940 **ORIGIN:** USA/UK  
**LENGTH:** 9.83M (32FT 3IN) **RANGE:** 1,530KM (950 MI) ON INTERNAL TANKS  
**ENGINE:** 1,490-HORSEPOWER, LIQUID-COOLED, V-12 PACKARD MERLIN **CREW:** 1  
**PRIMARY WEAPON:** 6 X BROWNING .50-CALIBRE MACHINE GUNS **SECONDARY WEAPON:** 2 X 454KG (1,000LB) BOMBS OR 10 X 127MM (5IN) ROCKETS

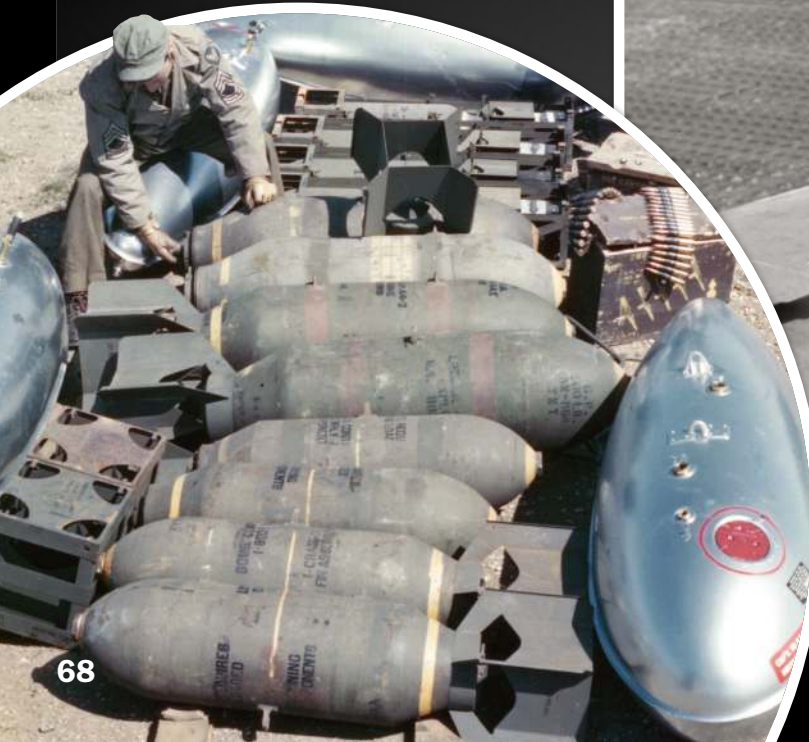


**“WHEN THE USAAF ADOPTED THE AIRCRAFT THE NOSE GUNS DISAPPEARED (AS THEY QUICKLY DID IN RAF SERVICE) AND ARMAMENT CHANGED TO FOUR 20MM HISPANO CANNON IN THE WINGS”**

*Armourers prepare to load a Mustang's six .50-calibre machine guns. 36 such belts of ammunition would be needed*

**ARMAMENT**

Early RAF models had four Browning M1919 .30-calibre and two Browning M2 .50-calibre machine guns in the wings, and another two .50-calibre machine guns in the nose. When the USAAF adopted the aircraft the nose guns disappeared (as they quickly did in RAF service) and armament changed to four 20mm Hispano cannon in the wings. Various other changes occurred in new models, but the P-51D/Mustang IV had six M2 Browning .50-calibre machine guns, and bomb racks under each wing capable of carrying 1,000-pound bombs. Up to ten 127 mm (five-inch) rockets could also be carried.



*Left: P-51 bombs flanked by the all-important fuel drop tanks, which gave the Mustang the range to fight over Germany*

**"THE CLASSIC TEARDROP CANOPY (INSPIRED BY THE HAWKER TYPHOON) WAS ADDED, GIVING AN EXCELLENT ALL-ROUND VIEW AND IMPROVED AERODYNAMICS"**



Three P-51Ds and a P-51B of the 375th Fighter Squadron, 361st Fighter Group, over France, July 1944

**Below:** Rockets stacked on an airfield, ready for use

**Below:** A P-51 drops napalm over a North Korean town during the Korean War



An armourer of the 332nd Fighter Group. Known as the 'Tuskegee Airmen'. The 332nd's air and ground crew were all African-American, and had to fight deep institutional racism



## DESIGN

The P-51 was designed to RAF specifications. After the concept design was approved and an order placed on 29 May 1940, the prototype rolled out just over 100 days later (though the engine took another month). The Mustang was lightweight aluminium, with an aerodynamically placed ventral radiator and efficient, laminar wings. Early versions had blocky, three-panel hinged cockpits, later changed by the RAF (and on some USAAF aircraft) to Spitfire-style bulbous 'Malcolm Hoods'. When the P-51D/Mustang IV was being designed, the classic tear-drop canopy (inspired by the Hawker Typhoon) was added, giving an excellent all-round view and improved aerodynamics.

One of the many P-51s still flying around the world today

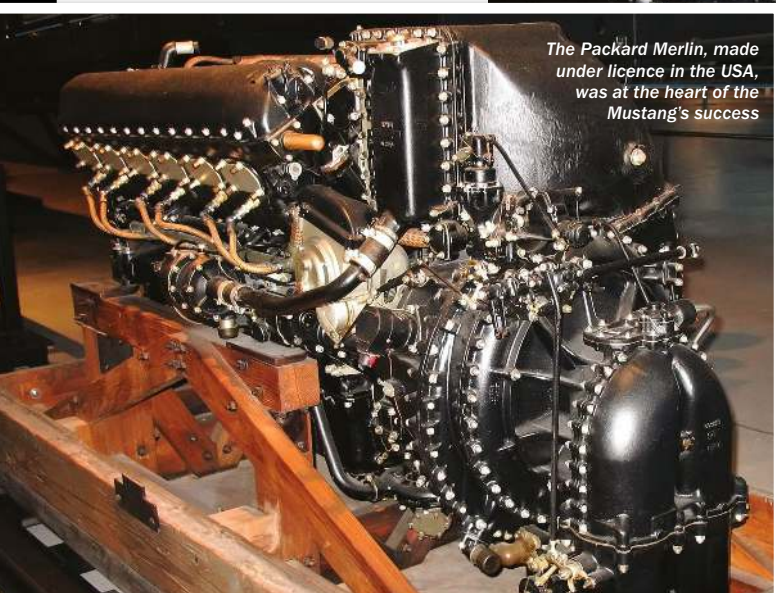


## ENGINE

The engine was the key to the Mustang's success. It was originally fitted with the 1,150-horsepower Allison V-1710-39 liquid-cooled V12, which provided great low-level performance but was poor above 15,000 feet. Then, in mid-1942 Rolls-Royce test pilot Ronald Harker asked to put a Merlin engine in a Mustang. After a long struggle he was allowed, and a truly superb fighter was born. Equipped with the US-made 1,300-horsepower Packard Merlin V-1650-3 liquid-cooled V12, with two-stage supercharger, the Mustang had excellent performance at all levels and could escort heavy bomber raids and confront the Luftwaffe head-on.



*The smooth aluminium finish on the Mustang increased its speed by several kilometres per hour, while the black section across the top of the nose stopped reflections from dazzling the pilot*



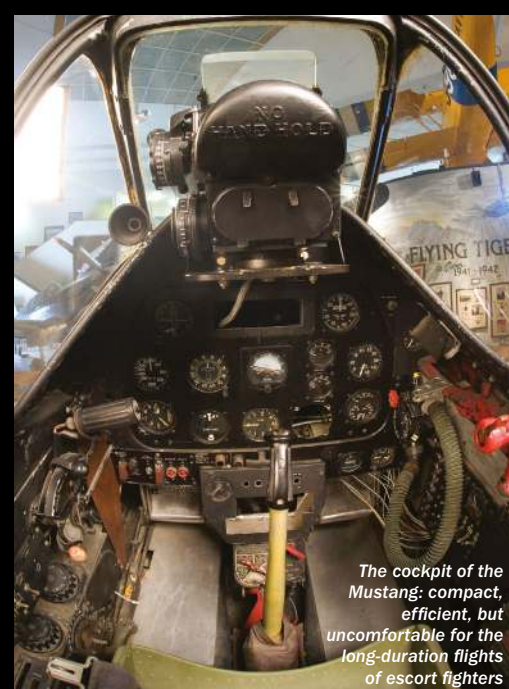
*The Packard Merlin, made under licence in the USA, was at the heart of the Mustang's success*

## COCKPIT

Small like all fighter cockpits, Mustangs had the standard flight instruments in front of the pilot. On the left side of the cockpit were the throttle, propeller and mixture controls, drop-tank switches, trim controls and undercarriage lever. On the right side were the electronics switches and dials underneath the VHF radio and Indicator Friend or Foe controls. Crucial to high-altitude operations over Europe, at the front right corner of the pilot's seat was the hot air vent (twist clockwise for more heat) and at the front left corner the defroster control to clear the windscreen.

**"CRUCIAL TO HIGH-ALTITUDE OPERATIONS OVER EUROPE, AT THE FRONT RIGHT CORNER OF THE PILOT'S SEAT WAS THE HOT AIR VENT"**

*The high nose of the Mustang gave the pilot a poor view on the ground. Pilots would weave so they could see ahead around it*



*The cockpit of the Mustang: compact, efficient, but uncomfortable for the long-duration flights of escort fighters*

## SERVICE HISTORY

LEGEND HAS IT THAT LUFTWAFFE CHIEF HERMANN GÖRING SAID, "THE DAY I SAW MUSTANGS OVER BERLIN, I KNEW THE JIG WAS UP"

The P-51A (US designation)/Mustang I (RAF designation) entered service with the RAF in January 1942. Its excellent low-level performance made it ideal for photo-reconnaissance and ground attack work over occupied Europe, although the RAF occasionally used them as fighters. It was the P-51B/Mustang III that became the first true fighter version, when the Allison engines were replaced by Merlins. Other improvements were also made, and this type entered front-line service with the USAAF

Eighth Air Force in the UK in December 1943. A few months later, the further-improved P-51D/Mustang IV with the classic teardrop canopy arrived. This type rapidly became the Eighth Air Force's main fighter, with the range and performance to escort American bombers deep into Germany and take on the fighters of the German air force.

Although later, more powerful models such as the P-51H were developed, the P-51D remained the definitive version, being used by the USAF during the Korean War and only being withdrawn from front-line service in 1953. Nearly 30 air forces around the world used P-51s, in over 20 variants. The Dominican Air Force was the last to retire the Mustang from service, in 1984, although many examples still fly around the world in private hands.

A taxiing Mustang being directed over a steel matting runway on Iwo Jima, 1945



A flight of Mustangs over Ramitelli air base, Italy, March 1945



USAAF F-6As, the reconnaissance version of the P-51, photograph a Normandy beach prior to the invasion

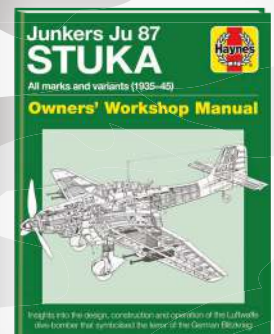
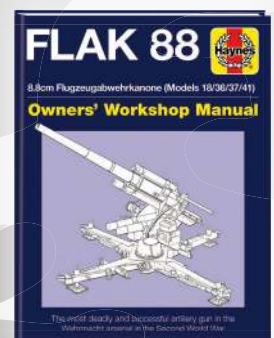
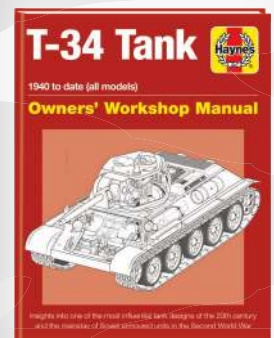
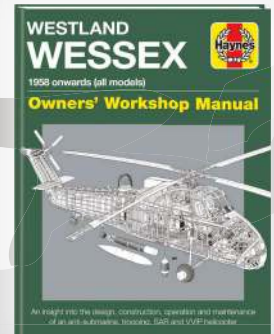


"ITS EXCELLENT LOW-LEVEL PERFORMANCE MADE IT IDEAL FOR PHOTO-RECONNAISSANCE AND GROUND ATTACK WORK OVER OCCUPIED EUROPE"

Images: Alamy, Getty, Alex Pang



A WORLD OF  
**MILITARY  
INFORMATION**



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**DISCOVERED**



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A new exhibition at Tate Britain explores the ways World War I impacted art movements, and how artists reflected on the new post-war world

# ART IN THE AFTERMATH



Aftermath: Art In The Wake Of World War One will be open at Tate Britain, London, from 5 June-23 September. For more information on the exhibition and to book tickets, please visit: [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

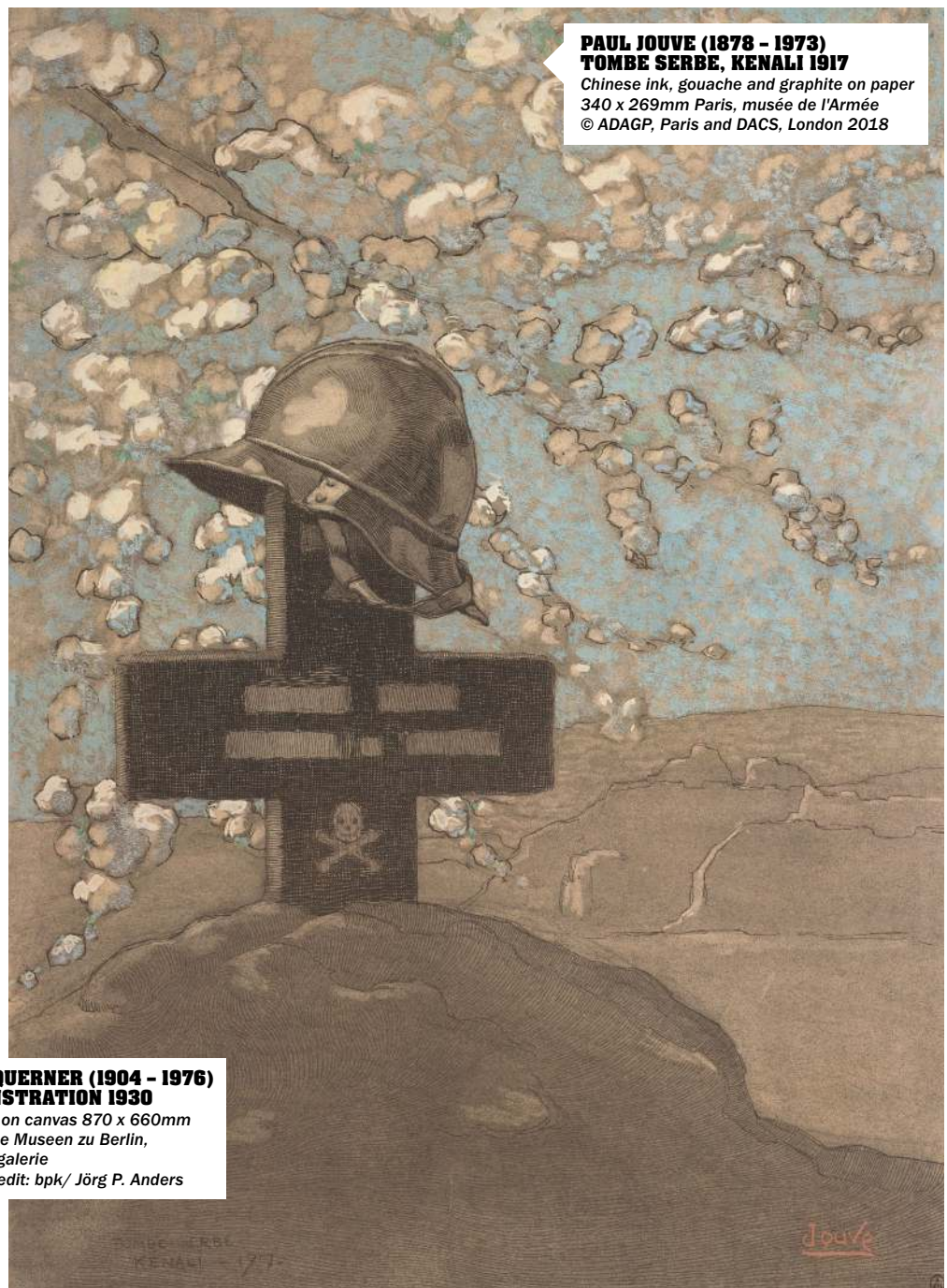
**T**he Great War left millions of dead and injured in its wake, but also irreversibly changed the culture of European society. Experiences of the war, and its impact during the years following the Armistice, were captured with the brushes and pencils of many notable artists, who depicted the changed world around them.

*Aftermath: Art In The Wake Of World War One* is a new exhibition at Tate Britain, London, which brings together over 150 works spanning from 1916-1932. The exhibition includes pieces from British, French and German artists, dealing with themes of war, acts of remembrance and the new post-war world in all three nations. As well as sculptures and other memorials commissioned to officially commemorate the great sacrifice of the war, artworks have also been chosen that depict the plight of veterans, who often suffered with physical and psychological scars.

Many examples of the iconic art movements of the period are on display, including surrealism, expressionism and futurism. Veterans of the war, such as Otto Dix and C.R.W. Nevinson, made huge contributions to these movements, drawing from their own experiences of the front line.



**CURT QUERNER (1904 - 1976)**  
**DEMONSTRATION 1930**  
Oil paint on canvas 870 x 660mm  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,  
Nationalgalerie  
Photo credit: bpk/ Jörg P. Anders



**PAUL JOUVE (1878 - 1973)**  
**TOMBE SERBE, KENALI 1917**  
Chinese ink, gouache and graphite on paper  
340 x 269mm Paris, musée de l'Armée  
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2018

**MARCEL GROMAIRE (1892 - 1971)**

**WAR 1925**

*Oil paint on canvas 1300 x 935mm*  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris  
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2018  
/ Roger-Viollet







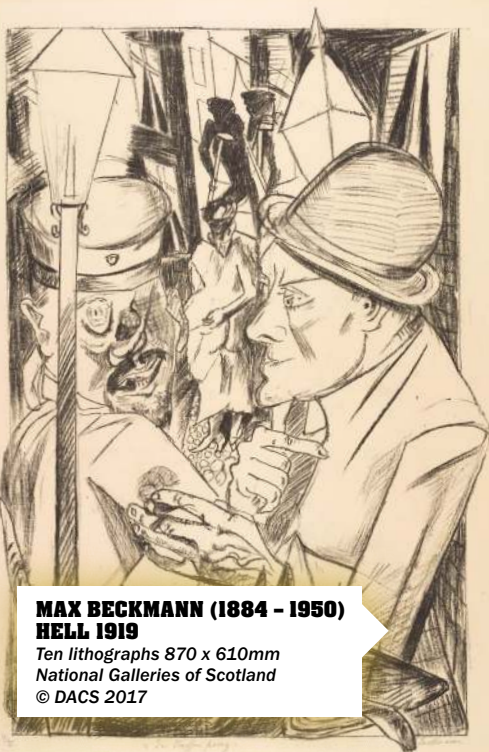
**CHRISTOPHER RICHARD WYNNE  
NEVINSON (1889 - 1946)**  
**PATHS OF GLORY 1917**  
Oil paint on canvas 457 x 609mm  
© IWM (Art.IWM ART 518)

**WILLIAM ORPEN (1878 - 1931)**  
**TO THE UNKNOWN BRITISH**  
**SOLDIER IN FRANCE 1921-8**  
Oil paint on canvas 1542 x 1289mm  
© IWM (Art.IWM ART 4438)



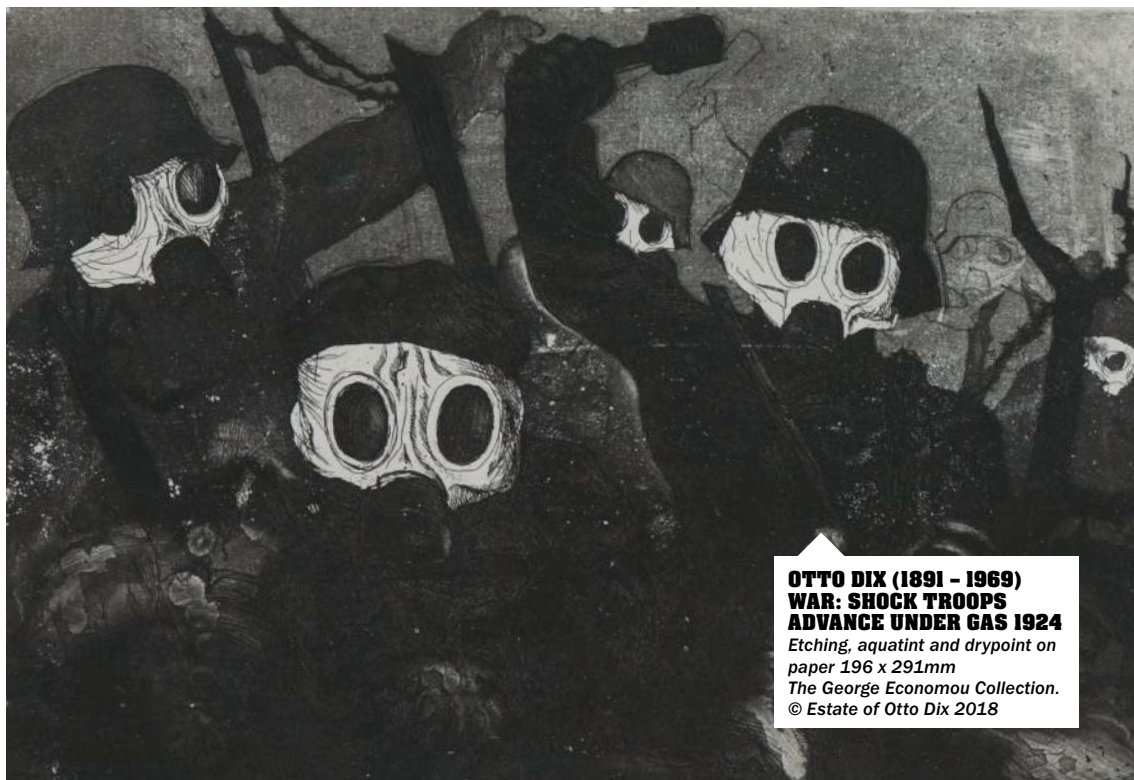
**PAUL NASH (1889 – 1946)**  
**WIRE 1918-9**

Watercolour, chalk and ink on  
 paper 486 x 635mm  
 © IWM (Art.IWM ART 2705)



**MAX BECKMANN (1884 – 1950)**  
**HELL 1919**

Ten lithographs 870 x 610mm  
 National Galleries of Scotland  
 © DACS 2017



**OTTO DIX (1891 – 1969)**  
**WAR: SHOCK TROOPS**  
**ADVANCE UNDER GAS 1924**

Etching, aquatint and drypoint on  
 paper 196 x 291mm  
 The George Economou Collection.  
 © Estate of Otto Dix 2018



## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# CHARLES HAZLITT UPHAM

Maleme, Crete, May 1941, and Ruweisat Ridge, Egypt, July 1942 saw the heroic actions of a man who lived to receive an unprecedented Victoria Cross and Bar – the only combat soldier to achieve the honour

WORDS MURRAY DAHM

**J**ust before his 31st birthday in September 1939, Charles Upham volunteered as a private in the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force. He had been in the territorials but refused to join at any higher rank. He was soon singled out for his qualities and made temporary lance corporal, but refused to attend the Officer Cadet Training Unit because he feared that such training would delay his departure for Europe. He was determined to learn everything he could and excelled in the use of the bayonet, machine gun and hand grenade. He once complained at the futility of having to miss bayonet practice in order to lay a lawn at camp headquarters. By the end of training his clear leadership abilities had been recognised and he had been made sergeant. Upham sailed with the first New Zealand troops for Egypt in December 1939.

In July 1940 Upham was finally persuaded to attend officer training (despite his known lack of respect for army conventions and rank, as well as a blunt and outspoken nature). There, he was insubordinate, questioned everything and was immensely unpopular with his British training officers. He was critical of the tactics taught, especially against tanks and aircraft. Placed last in his course in November 1941 he was nonetheless commissioned as a second lieutenant and given command of a platoon in the 20th Battalion, made up of rugged and tough farm men like himself from the Canterbury and West Coast regions of New Zealand. With his platoon, he served with the

New Zealand Division in Greece in March 1941 before being evacuated to Crete.

The 20th Battalion, along with the 28th (Maori) Battalion, was stationed at Maleme airfield in preparation for the German invasion. The New Zealanders, under the command of Lieutenant General Freyberg, had roughly a month to prepare their defences but possessed few resources other than manpower. Maleme, the keystone to the German airborne invasion, fell on 21 May. A counterattack was organised quickly, and at 4am Upham led a platoon of C Company to the village of Pírgos near the

aerodrome and reported back that the Germans were “in ditches, behind hedges, in the top and bottom storeys of village buildings, fields and gardens”. Unfortunately, the battalion counterattack was not pressed home and attention was instead shifted to taking the high ground overlooking the airfield.

Upham, despite being ill with dysentery, led his platoon forward 2,750 metres (3,000 yards) to the edge of the airfield, fighting all the way “unsupported and against a defence strongly organised in depth”. The platoon reached men from B Company and extracted them. “During this operation his platoon destroyed numerous enemy posts but on three occasions sections were temporarily held up”, it was reported. On the first occasion Upham himself went forward and “under heavy fire from a machine gun nest he advanced to close quarters with pistol and grenades”. When a second section was held up by two machine guns positioned in a house, Upham “went and placed a grenade through the window, destroying the crew of one machine gun and several others”. On the third occasion a section of his was held up, he “crawled within 15 yards [14 metres] of a machine gun post and killed the gunners with a grenade”.

Despite being described as a “walking skeleton” himself because of his dysentery, he carried a wounded man out and rallied troops to collect other wounded men. With a corporal, Upham then went forward 550 metres (600 yards) through enemy territory to bring in a company that had become isolated. He killed two enemies during this action and brought the

“EVERY MAN IN THE COMPANY  
AND EVERY MAN IN THE  
BATTALION IS SATISFIED THAT  
THE AWARD WAS MADE TO  
THE RIGHT MAN. HE WAS...  
UNQUESTIONABLY THE FINEST  
FIGHTING SOLDIER THAT IT HAD  
THROUGHOUT THE OPERATION”

Lieutenant Colonel  
Howard Kippenberger

KING GEORGE VI TO  
MAJOR-GENERAL  
HOWARD KIPPENBERGER  
[ON THE SUBJECT OF  
THE BAR TO UPHAM'S  
VICTORIA CROSS]: "DOES  
HE DESERVE IT?"  
KIPPENBERGER: "IN MY  
RESPECTFUL OPINION  
SIR, UPHAM WON THE VC  
SEVERAL TIMES OVER"

*Upam during the Crete campaign. He was ill with dysentery and severely wounded during the action around Maleme so this photo was likely taken just prior to the German invasion*



## HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

company to the battalion's new position. In all this time Upham refused to go to the hospital, determined to stay on duty.

On 23 May Upham held an exposed position overlooking the airfield until the battalion withdrew towards Canea at dawn. Upham was wounded at the Platanias bridge, but after he had his wound dressed insisted he return to battle. On 25 May the 20th Battalion was part of the counterattack at Galatas to allow time for more units to withdraw to Canea.

Upham was heavily involved in this action, being wounded in the leg. Still he led his men, killing 40 Germans with rifle and grenade. When ordered to retire, he left his platoon under the command of a sergeant and personally went to inform others to fall back. Watched by his men, he was fired on by two Germans, played dead and then "crawled into a position and having the use of only one arm he rested his rifle in the fork of a tree and as the Germans came forward he killed them both. The second to fall actually hit the muzzle of the rifle as he fell."

The decision was taken to retreat to Sphakia on the south coast of Crete, a 65-kilometre (40-mile) trek over mountainous terrain. Despite his illness and injuries, Upham made the trek and then, on 30 May with his platoon,

climbed a steep hill to place his men in defence of the retreat. A unit of 50 Germans was spotted advancing and, climbing to the top of the hill with a Bren gunner and two men, the four succeeded to take out 22 of the enemy. Upham, exhausted, ill and severely wounded, was evacuated to Egypt that night. He had not eaten for the entire nine days save for condensed milk, which his men found for him.

As the quotes from his Victoria Cross citation show, he was awarded the highest honour for a series of heroic actions spanning nine days. Upham recuperated in Egypt, learning of his award in October 1941. His commander, Lieutenant Colonel Howard Kippenberger, spoke of Upham's distress at being singled out for recognition, but also that every man in the battalion agreed that he was thoroughly deserving. Upham was convinced to accept the medal in recognition for all the brave actions of the men around him.

Interviewed for New Zealand radio, Upham took no credit for his own actions but thanked his commanders as well as the NCOs and men in his platoon, battalion and division, stating, "It is very easy to do any job under those circumstances." He even went so far as to name all the men in his company who had

been left in Greece and Crete as prisoners or casualties, asking the New Zealand public to send them care packages. Other than his bravery, it was Upham's care for his men's wellbeing that most endeared them to him.

After evacuation from Crete, the New Zealand Division served on garrison duty in northern Syria until summoned to the Western Desert on 14 June 1942. Upham had re-joined the division by this point, having suffered jaundice and pneumonia in the meantime.

The division was assigned to Minqar Qaim. On 24 June the German 21st Panzer Division and 90th Light Division broke through the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade and surrounded the New Zealanders. Lieutenant General Freyberg had been wounded and command fell to Brigadier Inglis, who decided that they had to break out.

The breakout was set for 28 June and, led by the Fourth Brigade, the New Zealanders drove through the lines of the 21st Panzer Division. During this action Upham, now a captain, commanded C Company and mounted grenade attacks on gun positions, tanks and transports.

Upham led, as always, from the front, and his attacks were carried out at such close quarters that his hands and face were lacerated by the shrapnel of his own grenades. He also ran out,



*Left: Charles Upham in Egypt with Lieutenant Colonel (later Sir) Howard Kippenberger. When the radio unit finally caught up with Upham to interview and congratulate him on his award, he spoke of everyone but himself. It was left to Kippenberger to tell of Upham's actions*



*Upham's numerous acts of bravery were worthy of several Victoria Crosses, but he remained modest about his contribution*

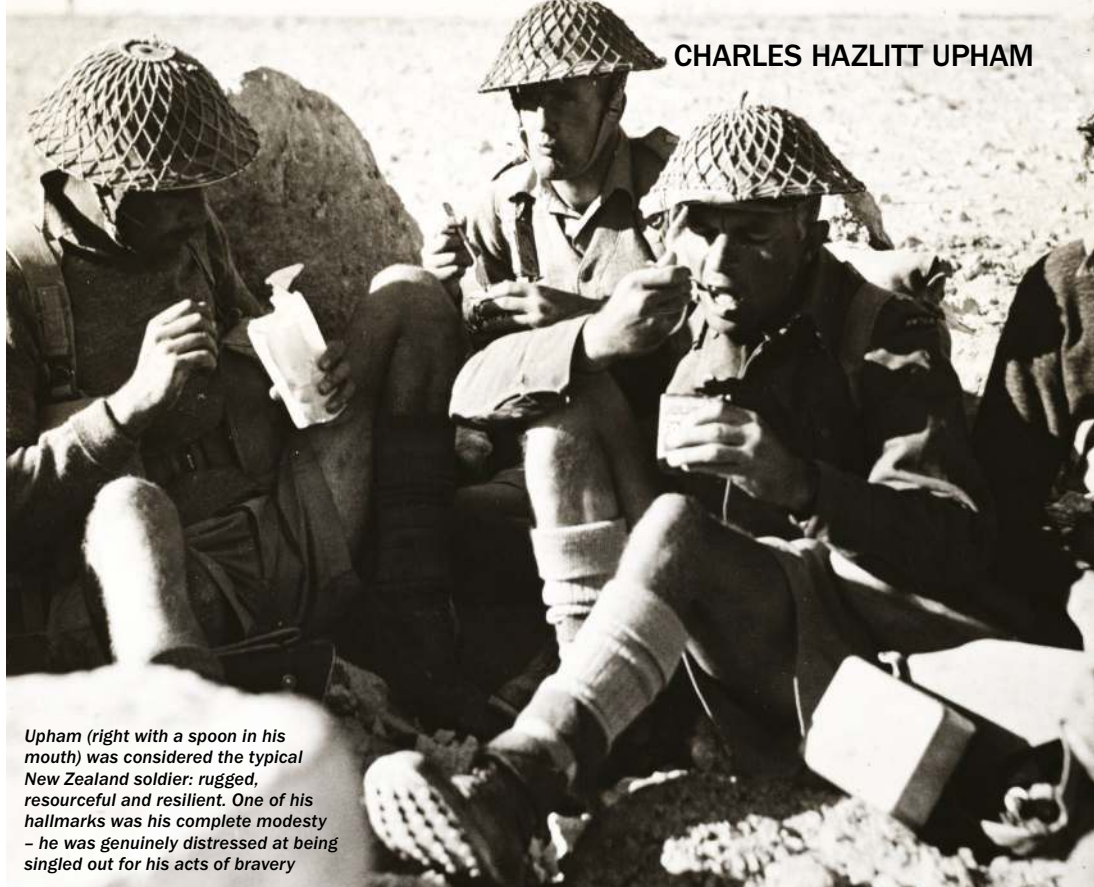


exposing himself to fire, so that the Germans would give their positions away and could be taken down by the men of C Company.

After the breakout, the Germans could not arrive at El Alamein for some days. There, the New Zealand Fourth and Fifth Brigades were placed to attack Ruweisat Ridge, some 60 metres (200 feet) high, 23 kilometres (14 miles) south of El Alamein.

The attack on 14 July did not go to plan, with the New Zealanders coming into contact with the enemy much earlier than expected and well short of the ridge itself. The commander of the Fourth Brigade needed a clear picture of what was going on and asked 20th Battalion to send someone forward. The commander of 20th Battalion detailed that task to Captain Upham's C Company. Rather than assigning anyone else, Upham went forward in a jeep himself and soon came under fire. He criss-crossed the battlefield and reported back to the commander of the brigade that the main German positions were on the flat in front of the ridge rather than the ridge itself. There was no choice but to press the attack.

Upham's company was then ordered to distract a force of German infantry, armoured cars and tanks that had taken up position in



*Upham (right with a spoon in his mouth) was considered the typical New Zealand soldier: rugged, resourceful and resilient. One of his hallmarks was his complete modesty – he was genuinely distressed at being singled out for his acts of bravery*

*The invasion of Crete was the first airborne invasion in history. Upham and his platoon were an essential part of the counterattack launched on 22 May and the delaying action until 30 May to allow evacuation*



## “AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN – DETERMINATION AND SINGLENESSE OF PURPOSE PERSONIFIED – LOYAL, CONSTRUCTIVE, QUIET, UNASSUMING AND FRIENDLY”

**Lieutenant J.E.R. Wood, M.C.**

a depression. The citation for his Bar stated that Upham “without hesitation at once led his company in a determined attack on the two nearest strong points on the left of the sector. His voice could be heard above the din of the battle cheering his men.”

Upham had his elbow shattered by an enemy bullet but continued to lead the frontal attack, which swept everything before it. The ridge was taken, but the New Zealand forces were exposed to artillery and machine gun fire and were without tank support. Upham had just made his way back to C Company when a mortar shell exploded and killed most of the company and left Upham badly wounded in the leg. The German counterattack, led by heavy tanks, overwhelmed the New Zealanders, who had only a few anti-tank guns. Upham was found near the six surviving members of his company and they were taken into captivity.

A bedridden Upham was a terrible prisoner for his Italian captors. When he had recovered, Upham attempted to escape from his POW camp, which led to him being sent to Germany in September 1943. He again attempted to escape and was interred at Colditz Castle – the place for habitual escapees – in October 1944. One of his fellow Colditz captives described Upham the prisoner in terms that sum him up in all things: “Determination and singleness of purpose personified – loyal, constructive, quiet, unassuming and friendly.” It’s unsurprising that his nickname was ‘Pug’.

Almost as soon as he was captured in Egypt, Kippenberger had begun to gather the evidence to support a Bar to Upham's VC. It was considered so unlikely that a Bar would be awarded that the question was put off until his release at the end of the war. Five acts of conspicuous bravery were attributed to Upham in the Egyptian desert and would have been enough to earn two Victoria Crosses.

Upham was released from Colditz on 15 April 1945 and awarded his Victoria Cross on 11 May by King George VI. Upham himself was unaware that there was a movement, led by General Bernard Freyberg, the commander of the New Zealand Division, to award him a Bar. When the evidence was gathered, however, it was clear he deserved it. His commander, Kippenberger, told King George in person that he thought Upham had earned the VC several times over. By the time the Bar was granted, Upham was back in Christchurch, New Zealand. His response when it was announced was typical: “Hundreds of others have done more than I did.” Upham maintained that he had only done his duty.

At the conclusion of the war, Upham returned to Canterbury. He shunned the spotlight and turned down a knighthood. He founded a farm despite the ongoing difficulties with his injuries. There he maintained his modest life with his wife Molly and three daughters although, legend has it, he never allowed a piece of German machinery onto his property.

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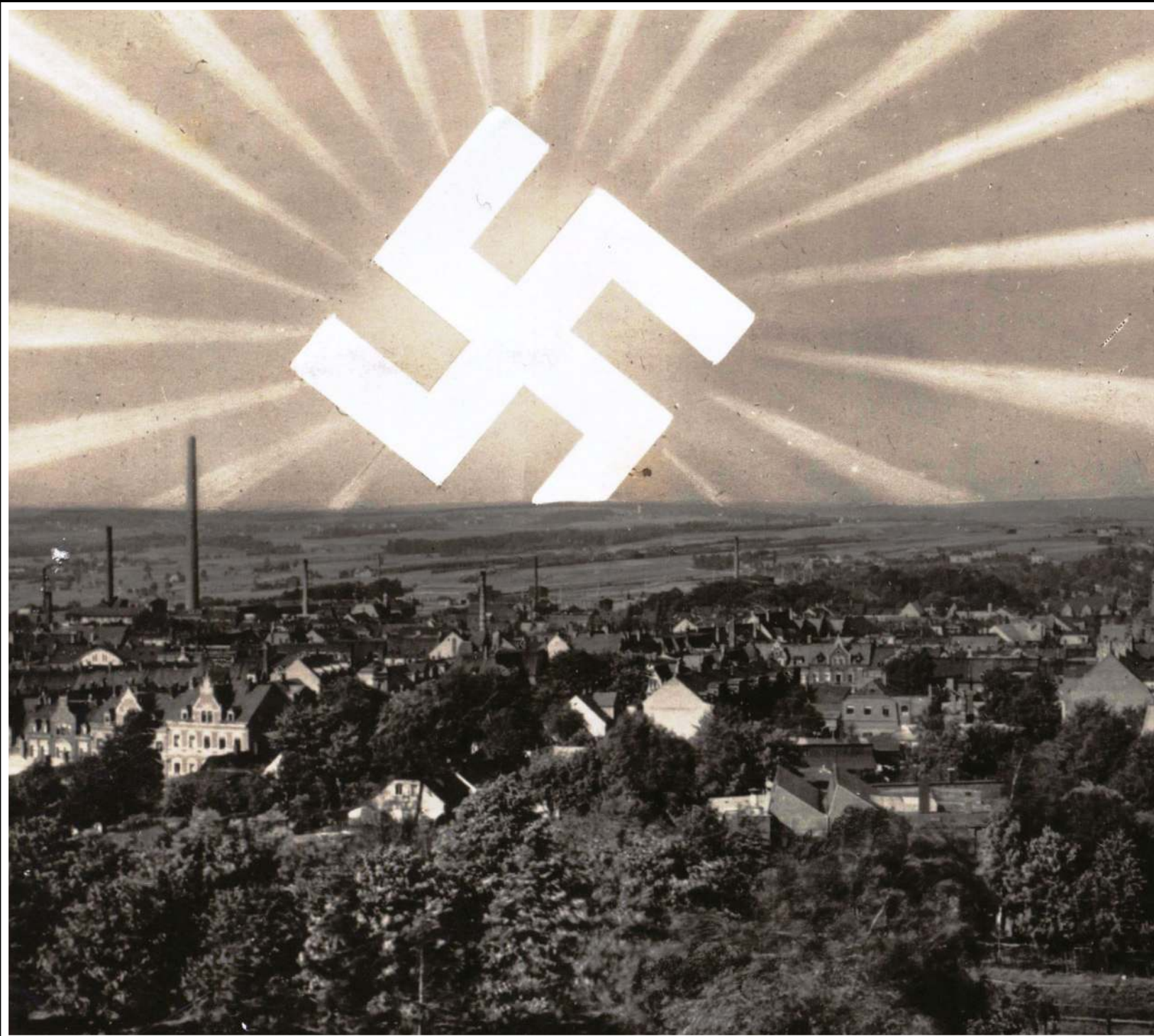
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# THE THIRD REICH IN PHOTOS DAWN OF WAR

1938-1940

FOR A SHORT TIME, EVERY MOVE MADE BY HITLER SEEMED TO BEAR FRUIT FOR HIS CAUSE. THESE RARE PHOTOS SHOW NAZI GERMANY GROW IN BOTH TERRITORY AND CONVICTION

WORDS PAUL GARSON



## THE SWASTIKA RISING AS THE NEW SUN OVER GERMANY C. 1938

Concerning the importance of imagery and the swastika, Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf*: "The art of propaganda consists precisely in being able to awaken the imagination of the people through an appeal to their feelings, in finding the true psychological form that arrests the attention and appeals to the heart of the nation's masses."

For the Third Reich, 1938 proved to be a pivotal year during which Hitler, five years into his ascendancy as Nazi Germany's supreme leader, could do no wrong. His prophetic pronouncements and tactical successes garnered new territory and the ever-growing zeal of the German public.

**"THE ART OF PROPAGANDA  
CONSISTS PRECISELY IN  
BEING ABLE TO AWAKEN THE  
IMAGINATION OF THE PEOPLE  
THROUGH AN APPEAL TO  
THEIR FEELINGS"**

— Adolf Hitler

Through various machinations, aided by Himmler and Göring, Hitler's opponents in the military were forced from their positions, with lackeys taking their place and the Wehrmacht coming under his control as minister of war and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. After the murder of Austrian political opponents, German troops marched into Austria on 12 March. These actions met overwhelming Austrian public support, with 98.9 per cent of the 4,484,475 Austrian electorate voting to merge with Germany.

On 1 October 1938, more flowers of welcome were offered to German troops as they paraded into the Czech Sudetenland after Hitler's sabre-rattling paid off again. Neither Britain nor France was prepared to go to war to protect Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, an area that was populated by some 3 million ethnic Germans. As a result of the 20 September 1938 Munich Agreement between Germany, Britain and France – which excluded Czechoslovakian participation – war was averted and promises of peace assured. Hitler was handed another uncontested victory, further fuelling his plans for aggression, and on 15 March he struck again at Czechoslovakia, devouring the rest of the country.

When Britain and France realised Hitler's plans for further aggression, they agreed to declare war if Germany should attack Poland. However, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact opened the door to a mutual invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. They duly carved their way into the country, first Germany

on 1 September 1939, then Red Army forces on the 17th of the month. As Poland fell to the onslaught from the west and east, Britain and France lived up to their agreement, declaring war against Nazi Germany.

As German successes mounted, including the occupation of Norway in April, Hitler's attention turned to Germany's long-time foe, the French. As German U-boats wrought havoc against British shipping, coordinated armoured and aircraft assaults were launched against Belgium and the Netherlands in May 1940. By 20 May German forces reached the French coast at Dunkirk, and Paris was occupied on 14 June. The six-week campaign against France was over by 21 June with the signing of an armistice in the same train car in which the Germans had signed their surrender at the end of World War I, and revenge against the humiliating defeat in the previous war was accomplished.

Celebrating the past two years of victory, Berlin hosted a massive parade on 19 July 1940. A few weeks later, in August, Hitler had already made ready his invasion of the USSR, his prime and primal enemy. There was a delay – a fatal one – when Mussolini, Germany's Axis ally, blundered into the Balkans, where the Greeks threw back the Italians in disarray. In response Hitler sent forces to rescue the situation, postponing his Russian timetable from mid-May to late June. The loss of several weeks of summer weather resulted in Russia's eternal comrade 'General Winter' taking its first toll on Hitler's plans, preventing another quick and devastating military victory.



### ANSCHLUSS IN AUSTRIA, GERMAN BY POPULAR DEMAND MARCH 1938

An Austrian family, including ten children, poses for a studio portrait. Several are wearing traditional Austrian attire, while two of its members don the uniform of Nazi Germany. After the country was annexed into the Greater German Reich in 1938, Austria was renamed Ostmark to mark the occasion.

### CZECH TOLL-ROAD AND CUSTOMS STATION 1 OCTOBER 1938

German troops congregate at the German-Czech border town of Finsterau in the Black Forest area of Bavaria. The soldiers pose with signs announcing a custom control area in both German and in Czech. Either by accident or design, the composition also includes what appears to be horse manure.





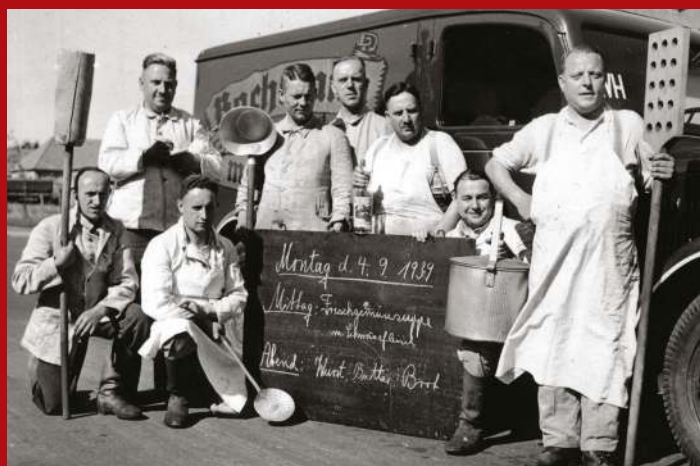
## SS MOTORCYCLE TROOPS PARADE THROUGH PRAGUE

C. MARCH 1939

The conquest, first by diplomacy then by force of arms, against Czechoslovakia brought the Third Reich not only new territory but also the world-famous Skoda Works armament factory located in Pilsen. The Skoda LT-35 and LT-38 tanks, originally built for the Czech military, were re-badged as the German Panzer 35(t) and Panzer 38(t), many of which were then employed in the attacks on Poland, France and the Soviet Union.

## MENU FOR MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 1939

A cook's unit proudly displays the tools of its trade and the day's repast for the troops, consisting of fresh vegetable soup with pork for lunch while for dinner sausage, butter and bread would be served. According to the chalked writing on the menu board, the date is 4 September 1939. The relative tranquillity of the photo belies the fact that just three days earlier, on 1 September, German troops, panzers and Stukas had sliced swiftly and lethally into neighbouring Poland, followed on 3 September, just one day before the photo, by the declaration of war by Britain and France.



## "JÜDISCHES WOHNVIERTEL"

C. SEPTEMBER 1939

A German soldier in Kielce, Poland, snapped a photo of the signage nailed to a barbed wire-covered sign written in German, Polish and Hebrew, which translates as "Jewish Residential Area".

The pre-war Jewish population of Kielce was 22,000, and the town was known for its large lime kilns owned by a Jewish family, which supplied lime for all of Poland. Another 6,000 Jews fled to the city as the German threat grew, and eventually 28,000 were fatally trapped there after the town's occupation on 4 September 1939.



## ARCH OF TRIUMPH

OCTOBER 1939

"Hail Victory! The Heroes of Poland" proclaims the greeting at a German-Polish border crossing where civilians and soldiers greet the victorious troops upon their return to their homeland.

The German campaign began on 1 September, attacking on three sides with 54 divisions, including seven armoured and seven motorised divisions. The Polish were able to respond with only 22 divisions of infantry and seven brigades of horse-mounted cavalry and two tank brigades. Most of the 700 Polish aircraft were destroyed on the ground, the Germans bringing to bear some 2,000 warplanes. Two weeks after the German invasion, its temporary Soviet allies attacked from the east. Warsaw fell on 27 September and all of Poland had fallen by 5 October.

## **SOLDIER AND BELGIAN GIRL**

### **JUNE 1940**

A Belgian girl poses with attentive German NCOs in the doorway of a hotel that has its walls decorated with signage of various tourist and automobile organisations.

On their way to invading France, German forces overran their Belgian neighbour, with the attack launched on 11 May 1940. By 17 May, Brussels was occupied. A country of only 8 million, it suffered some 12,000 soldiers killed and 16,000 wounded with an estimated 100,000 civilian casualties.

## **LEICA AT DUNKIRK**

### **POST-EVACUATION**

**C. JUNE-JULY 1940**

A German soldier readies his 35mm leica camera to record the array of German vehicles massed on the beach at Dunkirk, not long after trapped British troops were evacuated via the famous peoples' armada that mobilised for Operation Dynamo. During 26 May-4 June some 198,000 British and 140,000 French troops escaped death or capture as German troops swept towards the coast. Hitler had 'assisted' in their escape by refusing to release armoured forces to the area. However, 50,000 British troops were caught in the German advance, and some 11,000 were killed, as well as many French troops, who had remained behind to serve as a rearguard to shield their comrades.



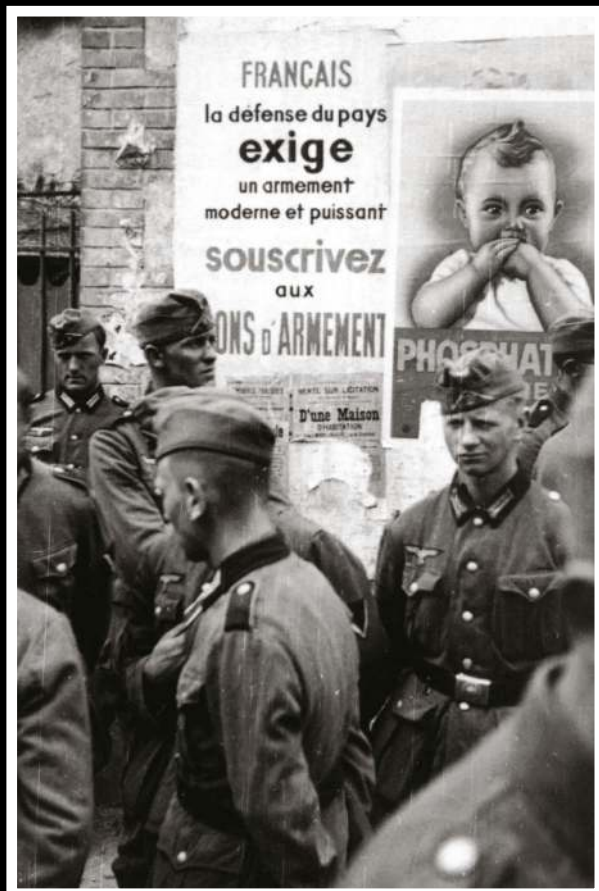
**"HITLER HAD 'ASSISTED' IN THEIR ESCAPE BY REFUSING TO RELEASE ARMOURD FORCES TO THE AREA"**



# **"FRENCHMEN, THE DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY REQUIRES A MODERN AND POWERFUL ARMAMENT"**

JUNE 1940

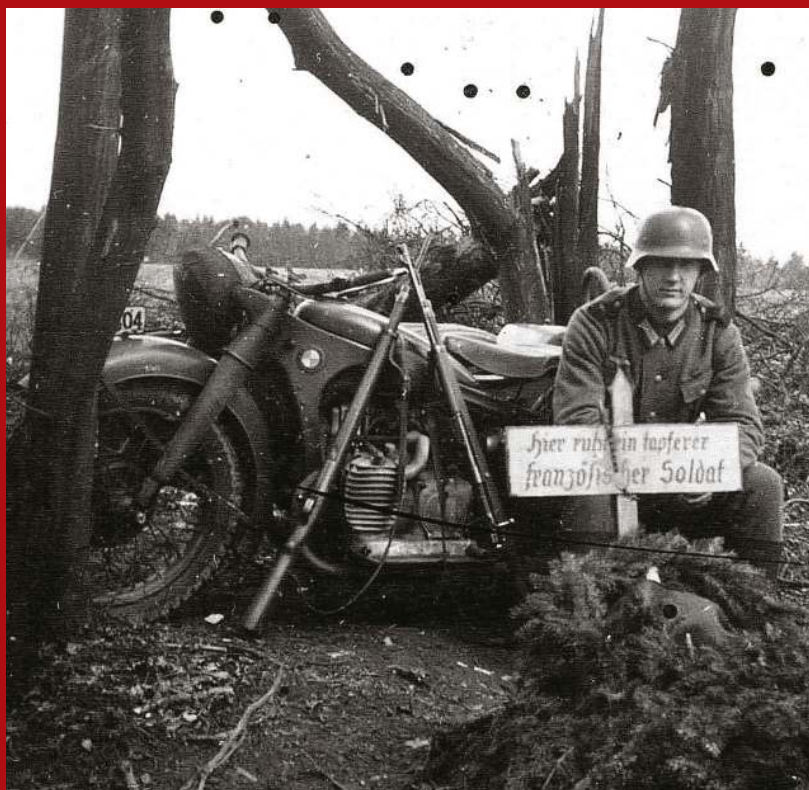
German troops mill around after the fall of Paris. While one poster apparently advertises baby food, another belatedly calls for the citizens of France to support rearmament by buying war bonds.



# **"HERE LIES A BRAVE FRENCH SOLDIER"** C. JUNE-JULY 1940

Against the backdrop of a blast-splintered tree, two Mauser rifles rest against the kradmelder's BMW-sidecar combination as his comrade snaps a photo of a grave site with its respectful signage.

German soldiers were ordered to behave themselves in France and many post-war French reported courteous relations with them. In Paris, most German soldiers congregated around the area of the Eiffel Tower and kept to themselves. The Germans, however, encountered a form of sabotage when first reaching the famous landmark. Workers had disabled the elevator and so the conquerors had to climb the stairs to reach the observation platform. The French did complain that the Germans turned the Parisian clocks to Berlin time and only church bells gave the city's residents the local time.



# **GEFANGENENLAGER IN PARIS** C. 1940

A French woman glares at the German taking her photograph, while she and other civilians gather around the gates of a POW installation. During the occupation thousands of civilians would die as hostages or were executed as members of the Resistance, while others would suffer in the torture chambers of the Gestapo and their French Vichy allies, the Milice or French secret police. In addition to French soldiers killed and injured during the German invasion, an estimated 60,000 French POWs died in German captivity and 70,000 members of the Resistance were killed. In total, over 300,000 french civilians died as a result of the war, including 18,000 gypsies (Sinti and Roma) and 75,000 French Jews – the latter collected in cooperation with French authorities and police.



**THE UMBRELLA INSULT** C. AUGUST 1940

German soldiers pose for their photo aboard a troop train. The graffiti translates to "We will crumple your umbrella" and refers to the Third Reich's efforts to defeat Britain – the often-employed umbrella the image identified with the country.

A seemingly lighthearted threat, it also echoes Hitler's own relationship with the British. Something of an Anglophile, he had hoped Britain would join him on his crusade against Soviet Communism. Rebuffed, Hitler set into motion Unternehmen Seelöwe (Operation Sea Lion), a proposed invasion across the English Channel. However, due to the failure of Göring's vaunted Luftwaffe to bring Britain to its knees during the Battle of Britain, the invasion never took place, the island nation standing firm in its opposition to Nazi Germany.

**'THERE ARE NO MORE ISLANDS' PRESS RELEASE PHOTO**

13 AUGUST 1940

This image, sourced from Berlin, shows a pilot being prepared for a bombing run on England. Inscribed on the fuselage are the words, "There are no more islands", to which is attributed 'Adolf Hitler'. Apparently the führer was a fan of the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, since a similar line had recently appeared in one of her poems. Despite Hitler's declaration, The Battle of Britain helped maintain Britain's separation from Nazi Germany.

**"INSCRIBED ON THE FUSELAGE ARE THE WORDS, 'THERE ARE NO MORE ISLANDS', TO WHICH HITLER HAS SIGNED HIS NAME"**



## REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books to hit the shelves

# FIGHTING THE BRITISH

## FRENCH EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS FROM THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

A USEFUL RESOURCE FOR BOTH THE HISTORIAN AND THE CASUAL ENTHUSIAST OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

**Author:** Bernard Wilkin and René Wilkin **Publisher:** Pen & Sword Military **Price:** £19.99 **Released:** Out now

The experience of the common soldier has been of particular interest to historians since the 'new military history' movement of the 1970s. Previously, history had focused mainly on the generals and other high-ranking officers, while the mass of the army was treated more or less as a single entity that either attacked or retreated depending on its orders.

The new perspectives offered insight into the experience of the soldiers themselves, and was as much concerned with the psychological impact of warfare, and the effect on society as a whole, as it was with the drums and trumpets of the traditional battle narrative.

A greater understanding of the men in the ranks allows for a much deeper appreciation of the experience of warfare and battle, and there is a wealth of documentation to dive into, from letters home, diaries and memoirs. Dealing with the soldiers of a foreign country, however, leads to issues with language, so a book like this, from Bernard and René Wilkin, is extremely valuable.

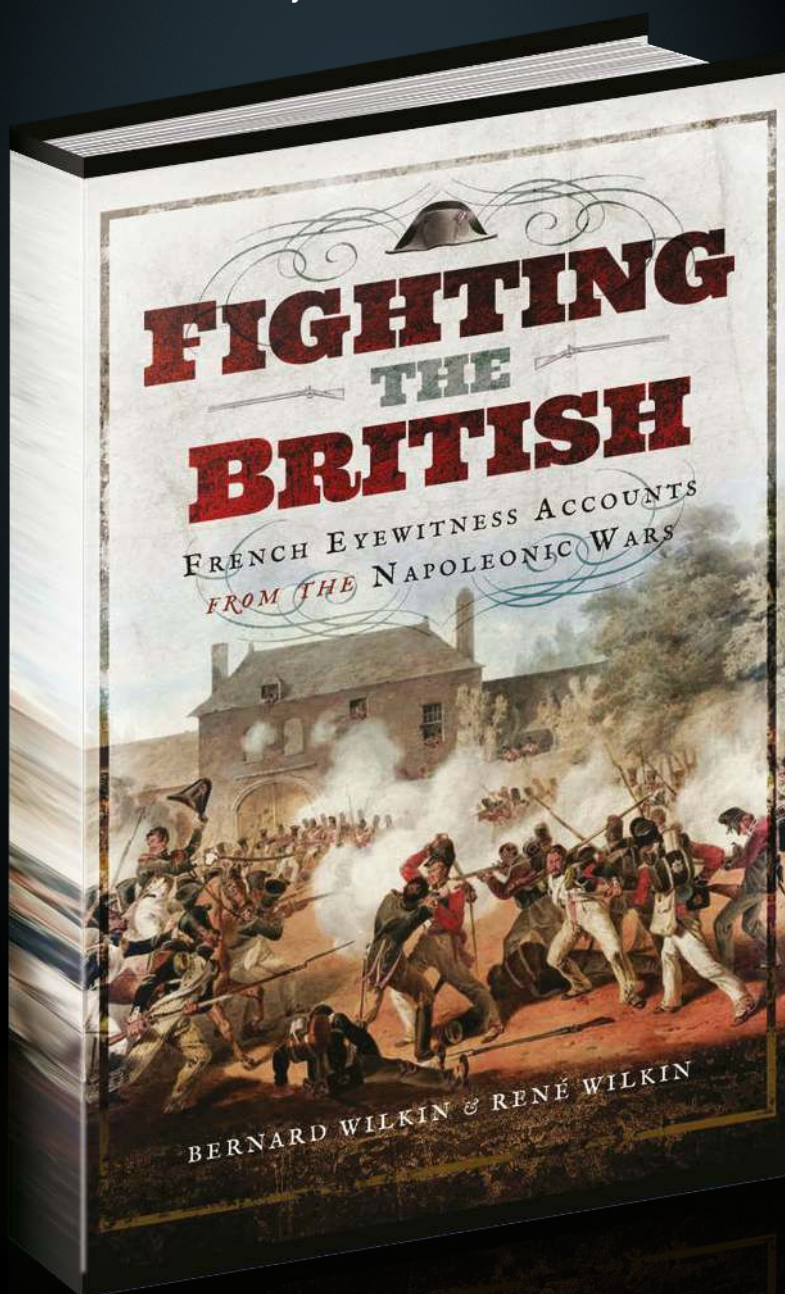
Drawing mainly on published primary sources (eyewitness accounts that have previously been published in their original language), this book brings to life the French soldiers who marched under Napoleon or served in the French navy. Previously inaccessible to anyone without a very firm grasp of French, these accounts can now be enjoyed by military enthusiasts and historians alike.

It is fascinating to discover, therefore, that the anticipation of a distinctly French interpretation of war is largely disappointed. This is not a criticism, it is a valuable realisation that the experience of the common soldier was pretty much the same whatever uniform he was wearing – conditions were appalling, food and ammunition were scarce and there was an awful lot of waiting around in complete ignorance of what the generals were up to.

During the Egyptian campaign, for instance, after Napoleon returned to France, the common soldiers were left to wonder what his departure meant. One soldier wrote, "They talk in various ways about the departure of our general. Some (and I think they are silly) only see treason; others... see it as a ray of happiness: he will fetch reinforcements, or peace will come and we will go back to our dear fatherland". The common soldier was always the last to know what was really happening.

The book does not quite stick to its own parameters. Many of the extracts from letters and diaries (such as the one quoted above) have nothing to do with the British, but they are all useful for the student of the period, as much as the casual enthusiast.

The book is not always the easiest read, as the presentation of one account after another can become a little numbing, but at times it can grip the reader. Many of the passages dealing with battle (especially when the book reaches Waterloo) have an immediacy that is almost shocking. This is an extremely valuable resource for those interested in life in the ranks during the Napoleonic Wars.

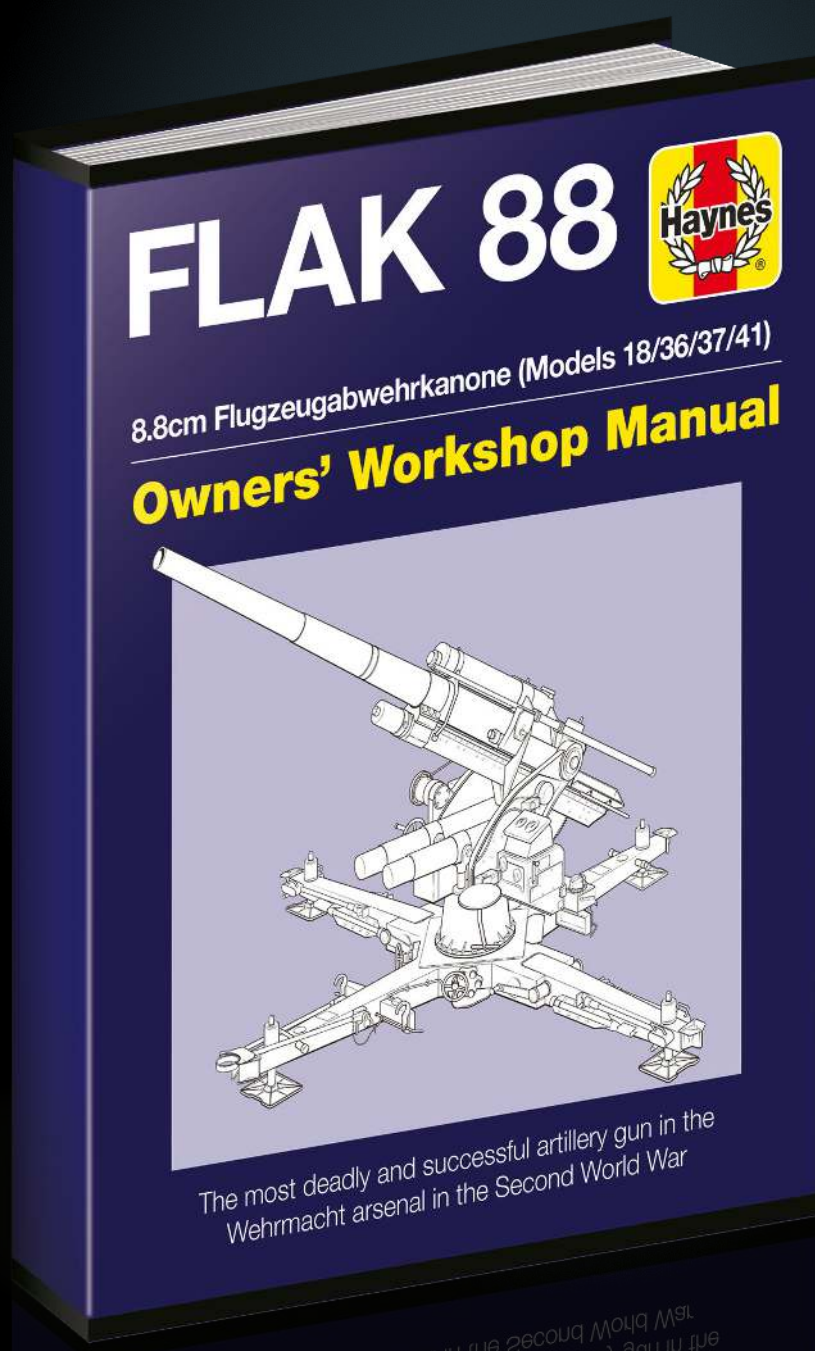


# FLAK 88

THE STORY OF THIS FEARED, RESPECTED AND HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL WORLD WAR II GERMAN ARTILLERY PIECE IS PRESENTED IN VIVID DETAIL

**Author:** Chris McNab **Publisher:** Haynes Publishing **Price:** £25.00 **Released:** Out now

**“MCNAB’S BOOK IS PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED WITH SKETCHES OF THE WEAPON IN ALL ITS PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT, GIVING CREDENCE TO THE SUBTITLE OF OWNERS’ WORKSHOP MANUAL”**



The most deadly and successful artillery gun in the Wehrmacht arsenal in the Second World War

This is the story of a gun. But not just any gun – this particular gun happened to be the most deadly and successful artillery piece in the Wehrmacht arsenal in World War II.

As Chris McNab points out in his book detailing the history of the notorious Flak 88, it is actually quite rare that an artillery weapon gains a high level of notoriety or public awareness. Big Bertha, the super-heavy siege artillery, developed by the German armaments manufacturer Krupp, became a household name in Britain during and after World War I. Much later, Saddam Hussein's so-called 'Supergun', one of the most audacious pieces of engineering ever designed, was a headline-grabber in the 1980s.

Flak 88 applies to a series of guns, the first one officially called the 8.8cm Flak 18, the improved 8.8cm Flak 36, and later the 8.8cm Flak 37. Flak is a contraction of Flugzeugabwehrkanone, which translates as 'aircraft-defence cannon' – the original purpose of the weapon. In English, flak became a generic term for ground anti-aircraft fire. During the war, the '88' was feared and admired by the Allies in every theatre of war in which it was deployed.

McNab's book is profusely illustrated with sketches of the weapon in all its phases of development, giving credence to the subtitle of "Owners' Workshop Manual". There is also a collection of photos of Flak 88 in action on various fronts, from Western Europe to North Africa, some of which vividly display the gun's destructive capability.

By the time the war in North Africa moved into Sicily and mainland Italy in 1943, the British, American and other Western Allied forces were already painfully aware of the capabilities of the Flak 88 guns, and thus proceeded with caution when it was known that 88s were in the vicinity. Designed initially as an anti-aircraft (AA) weapon, the Flak 88 nevertheless became notorious in ground warfare. However, McNab draws attention to the fact that as an anti-tank (AT) weapon, it was not the only show in town. "In many ways," he wrote, "the British, Americans and Soviets all fielded AT weapons that were [the Flak 88's] equal... The Flak weapons, however, were available to the German forces right from the beginning of the Second World War, and in significant numbers. Develop any good weapon, mass produce it and place it in well-trained hands, and it will have a powerful influence on the battlefield."

An undetermined yet certainly high number of Allied aircraft were downed by Flak 88 guns. This is to be expected, as the 88s constituted the largest part of the Reich air defences and were almost constantly in action against bombing raids. By the summer of 1944, 13,260 heavy AA guns were in operation in Germany, of which 10,930 were 8.8cm Flak guns. Statistics that are available speak with tragic eloquence of the gun's effectiveness. During its night-hours bombing campaign, RAF Bomber Command lost 3,623 aircraft between 1942 and 1945. Of these, 1,345, or 37 per cent of the total, were accounted for by Flak 88 guns. Clearly the Flak 88 was mechanically a highly reliable piece of artillery. Had it not been, it would not have entered the Allies' list of the most feared weapons.

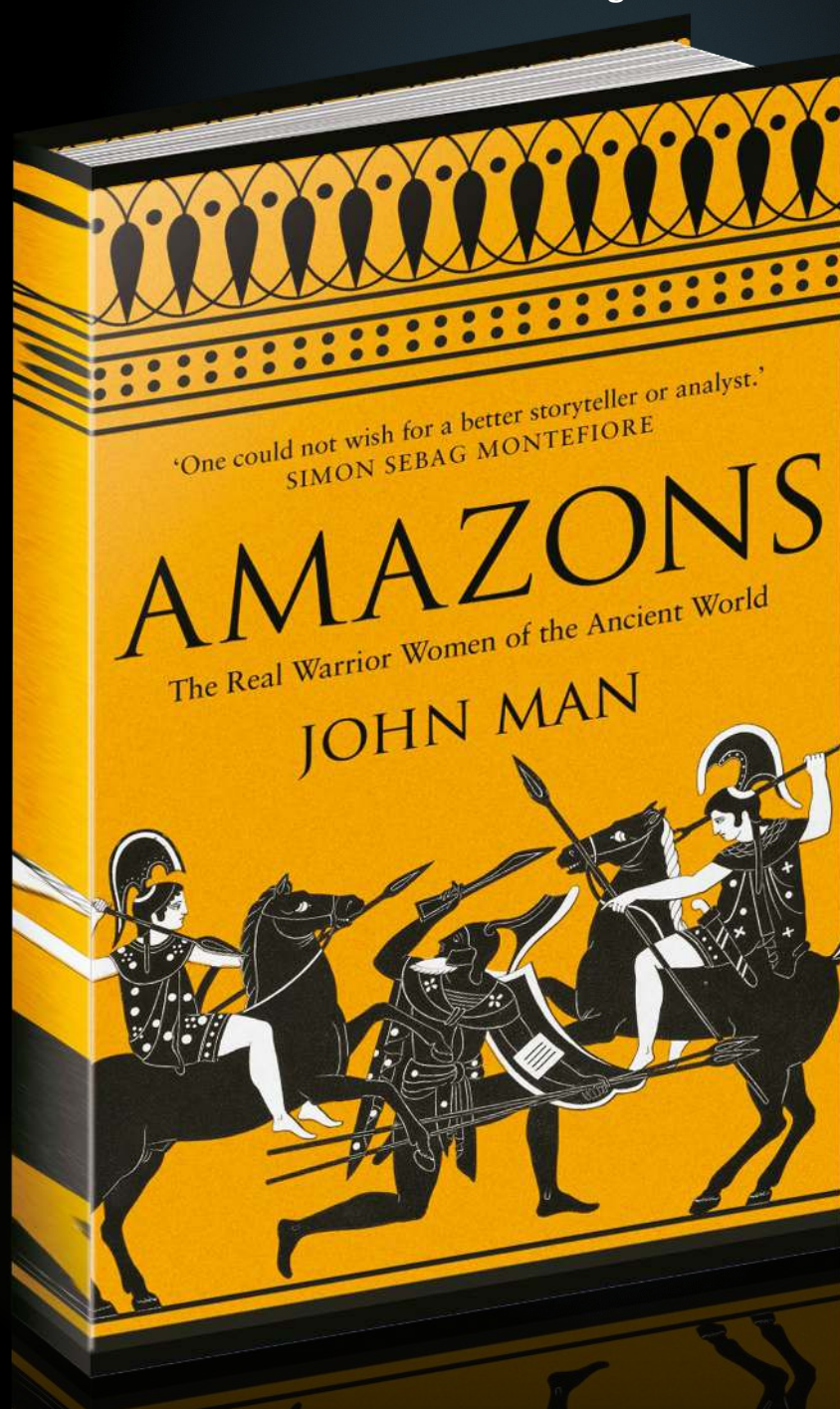


Flak 88 guns pictured in 1935. These guns saw constant use throughout WWII

# AMAZONS

WHO WERE THE AMAZONS OF ANTIQUITY, AND DID THEY REALLY EXIST? JOHN MAN'S BOOK GIVES SOME SURPRISING ANSWERS

**Author:** John Man **Publisher:** Penguin Random House **Price:** £9.99 **Released:** Out now



In publishing today, books need a hook, something to pull the reader from our glittery screen world into the tranquillity of print. What better hook than the warrior women of the ancient world? Amazons have got name recognition in their own right, and if you couple that with the world's biggest river, the corporate behemoth and Wonder Woman herself, then you have at least four barbs to grab the browsing reader. One can imagine the marketing department purring with promotional satisfaction.

However, sometimes the hook is a long way from the line. In this case, a more accurate title for the book might have been along the lines of 'high status women of various ancient central Asian nomadic tribes that very few people have heard of, but whose recent excavations have revealed a very interesting society, with later excursions to tell how the Amazon River got its name, accounts of warrior women from recent history and the recent rediscovery of horseback archery (by a man, but we'll pass swiftly over that and on to the women he's inspired to ride horse and pull bowstrings). Oh, and how Wonder Woman had her genesis in the 20th century in a bizarre menage à quatre involving William Moulton Marston, a supposedly feminist psychologist, and his three lovers, all proponents of women's emancipation'. Although the author does not mention this in *Amazons*, the reader is left to conclude that Marston's most notable achievement was to persuade three intelligent, political women that they could best serve the cause of women's liberation by becoming, in effect, his harem.

The author does a valiant job of trying to tie these other Amazons with the women of Greek mythology, although the connections are tenuous at best. In his accounts of the many recent excavations of nomadic burial mounds in Mongolia and the 'Stans, Man does sterling work in bringing the exciting finds of archaeologists to public knowledge, and this is the most fascinating part of the book. How the Amazon River and rainforest came to be named after the warrior women of antiquity is interesting but a little afflicted by anthropological one-upmanship, the author never failing to mention the time he spent living with the Waorani tribe in Amazonia. There's irony too, in a book on warrior women being written by a man: the mythological Amazons were very much a male creation.

From the above, the prospective reader can see that this is a discursive book. In fact, it's a strange beast to pigeonhole – part history, part archaeology, part travelogue and memoir, part speculation. On such a journey, the charm of your authorial companion is vital to making the voyage worthwhile: such judgement is personal and difficult to project upon others. This reviewer can say that he found John Man a pleasant companion to spend a few hours with, one whose ideas were always worth hearing but seldom worth mulling over.

**"THE PROSPECTIVE READER CAN SEE THAT THIS IS A DISCURSIVE BOOK. IN FACT, IT'S A STRANGE BEAST TO PIGEONHOLE – PART HISTORY, PART ARCHAEOLOGY, PART TRAVELOGUE AND MEMOIR, PART SPECULATION"**

Right: This stone carving depicts two female gladiators from around the 1st-2nd century CE



# THE 21 ESCAPES OF LT ALASTAIR CRAM

DAVID GUSS EXPLORES THE MULTIPLE BREAKOUT ATTEMPTS OF A MAN WHO SAW ESCAPE AS A SPIRITUAL NECESSITY

**Author:** David M. Guss **Publisher:** Macmillan **Price:** £18.99 **Released:** Out now

If ever there were a tale to substantiate the platitude of 'courage in the face of extraordinary odds', that would be the wartime adventures of Lieutenant Alastair Cram, a testament to one man's dogged determination never to give up. The story of Cram's escapes from enemy captivity in World War II reads like a John Buchan novel.

Cram was first taken prisoner in North Africa in 1941, and as author David M. Guss reveals in his entertaining and thoroughly researched book, this began a long odyssey through ten different POW camps and three Gestapo prisons. Cram effectively became a serial escapist à la Houdini, with the difference of putting his life on the line each time he broke free. He fled his captors an extraordinary 21 times, including his last escape from a POW camp in April 1945, after which he was awarded the Military Cross. For the protagonist of this book, the struggle to set himself free became "escape as a need, as a spiritual necessity".

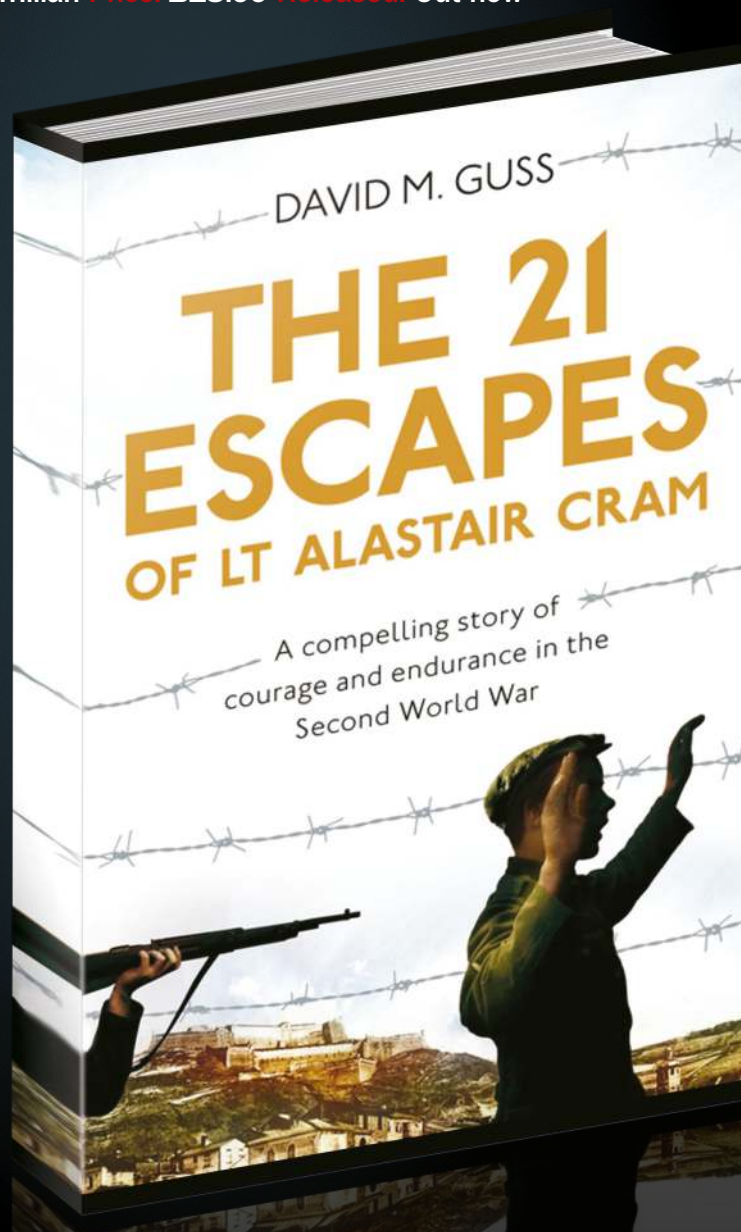
It even seems as if Cram regarded escape from the highest security prisons as the pinnacle of achievement. He was fully aware that bare-faced bravado was often the surest ploy of all: "Cheek and coolness," he once said, "may overcome even a meeting with a sleepy guard."

Perhaps the most dramatic of his attempts was from Gavi, a maximum-security prison that became known as the Italian Colditz, where he was sent as one of the most dangerous inmates punished for their perpetual efforts to escape. It was there that Cram met David Stirling, the legendary founder of the SAS. Together they put together the plan for the 'Cistern Tunnel' escape, one of the most audacious mass escape attempts of the entire war. Cram was later persuaded by fellow Scotsman Stirling to join the SAS.

Guss had the good fortune to be given access to Cram's papers, including the wartime journals, on which this book is based. To the author, Cram comes across as a "private person", uninterested in talking about his many adventures. Yet his pencil-written diaries stand as a reflection of a man possessed with the need to tell his story. Cram toyed with the idea of publishing his memoirs, but in the end he simply took the foolscap and cheap school notebooks he had written on and stuffed them into an envelope, never to be looked at by him again.

Cram honed his escape tactics almost into a science. He wrote in his diary, "The most favourable opportunities for escape occur within the first few hours of capture... Enemy front line troops can devote only part of their attention to prisoners." Should this prove unsuccessful, "Feigned sickness may lead to transport. Sick men are less strictly guarded than fit."

What drove Cram to wage a relentless battle to flee one prison after the next? This is where the spiritual element comes into the picture. The author finds that his subject was concerned about "the soul-destroying nature of imprisonment". Other wartime internees, for instance the writer Eric Newby, who was captured during an operation on the coast of Sicily in 1942, appreciated the irony that prison also provided unprecedented freedom. "Every need was taken care of," he said. "There were no obligations, no decisions, no financial responsibilities, no job." Cram, however, was cut from a different cloth. For the hero of this book, it was precisely this lack of responsibility and engagement with the outside world "that threatened to drain one's vitality and insidiously sap the will".



**"THEY PUT TOGETHER THE PLAN FOR THE 'CISTERN TUNNEL' ESCAPE, ONE OF THE MOST AUDACIOUS MASS ESCAPE ATTEMPTS OF THE ENTIRE WAR"**

Images: Alamy

# UNCOVER THE DYNASTIC CONFLICT THAT TORE APART MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Find out how the brutal clash between the Houses of York and Lancaster in the Wars of the Roses paved the way for a new dynasty altogether...



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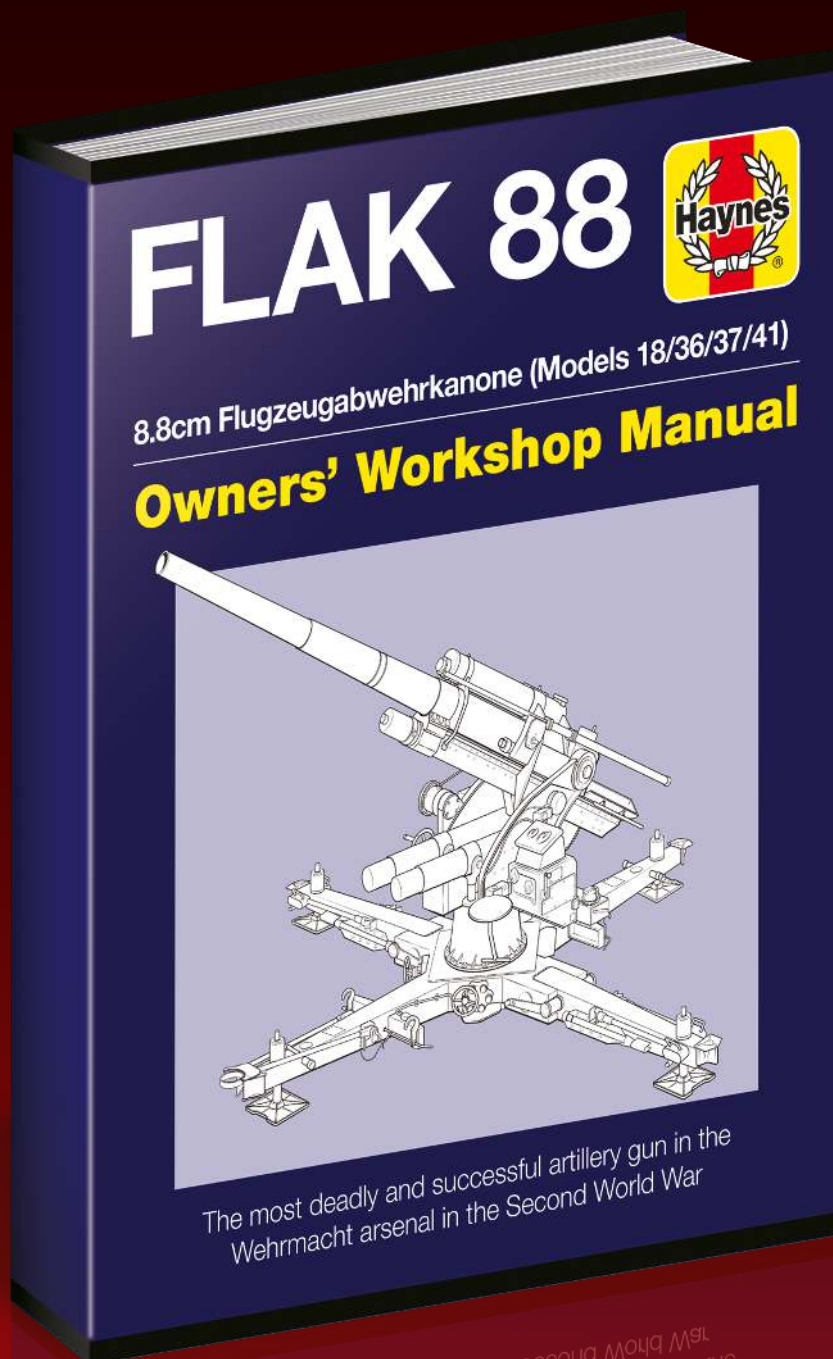
*Flak 88s in action in October 1940. They proved to be highly effective anti-aircraft weapons*

The Flugzeugabwehrkanone, more commonly known as the Flak 88, was used throughout WWII as an anti-aircraft weapon, but was also deployed to fire directly on enemy armour. It caused havoc for Bomber Command raids, with its accuracy and rapid rate of fire bringing down many aircraft over the course of the war. Although it may not have the same reputation as the Panzer VI, the iconic tank's main armament was in fact adapted from the Flak 88.

Through its characteristic detailed illustrations and graphics, the Haynes *Flak 88 Manual* takes

you through the history, tactics and technical aspects of this impressive but deadly weapon. Author Chris McNab explores the origins of the gun's design, its many iterations, as well as details of the various ammunition it utilised. Beyond the weapon itself, the manual also describes the crews who manned the Flak 88, as well as how they performed in the several theatres in which they were deployed.

**This issue, History of War has five copies of *Flak 88* to give away. For more information on the manual, please visit [www.Haynes.com](http://www.Haynes.com)**



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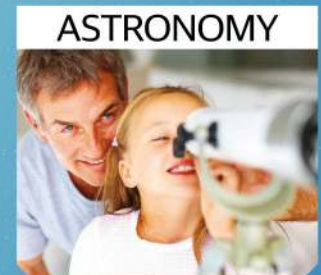
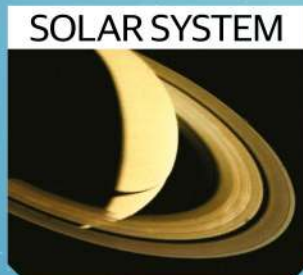


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N E X T   M O N T H

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SHARPSHOOTERS, AND THE CAMPAIGNS THAT EARNED THEM GLORY

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Image: Alamy

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# ROMAN RIDGE HELMET

“ROMAN RIDGE HELMETS WERE NOTICEABLY DIFFERENT IN DESIGN TO THE GALEA, WITH A VAULTED SKULL, A SMALLER NECK GUARD, AN ADDED NOSE GUARD AND CURVED CHEEK GUARDS”

*This helmet was discovered in Serbia. Serbian territory was ruled by Rome and later Byzantium across three provinces called Moesia, Pannonia and Dardania*

This ornate, jewel-encrusted helmet is a striking example of military fashion from the late Roman Empire

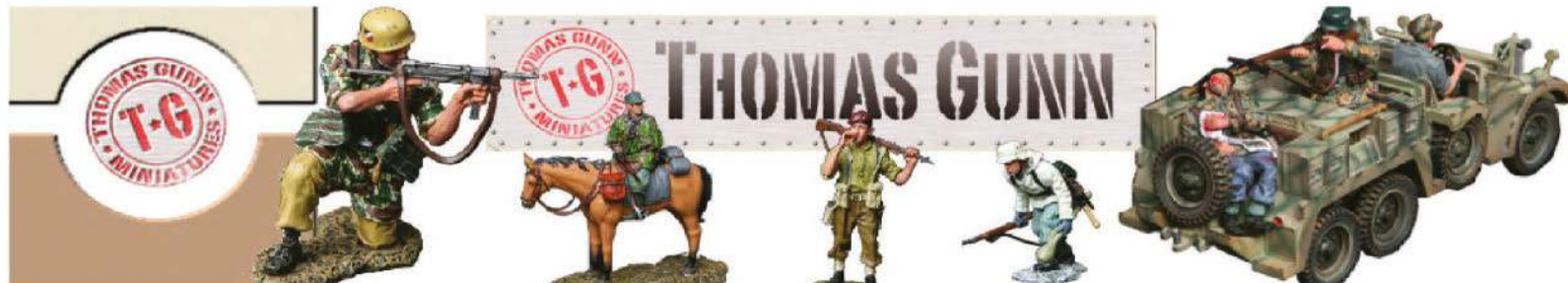
**T**he distinctive helmets of Roman soldiers were an iconic symbol of imperial might. Along with other pieces of heavy armour, a helmet was a mainstay of Roman soldiers' personal defence, and its design gave it a formidable, unyielding appearance.

By the 4th century CE, the Roman Empire was undergoing significant change and imperial military fashion was still evolving. The Etruscans, who were the early Romans' neighbours in Italy, influenced the traditional 'Galea' helmet. Over time, other influences crept in from further afield, including the Sassanid Empire. The Sassanids heavily influenced the design of what became known as the 'ridge helmet' of the late Roman army.

Roman ridge helmets were noticeably different in design to the Galea, with a vaulted skull, a smaller neck guard, an added nose guard and curved cheek guards that were attached by straps or laces instead of metal hinges. The overall effect was a more 'Medieval' appearance, but the wealth of Rome was still evident in this pictured helmet.

Discovered at Berkasovo in Serbia, the helmet dates from around the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great. Its owner was clearly wealthy because, although it is made of wrought iron, it is sheathed in silver gilt and decorated with glass and gems, including emeralds and onyx. The helmet was one of two discovered at Berkasovo, along with silver belts, plates, straps and sheets. The apparent high cost of its production indicates that its owner was probably a wealthy figure who was either a high-ranking officer or even a ruler.





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Aircraft flown by Royal Air Force Bodney, Norfolk, England, 1944.

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Aircraft flown by 2nd Air Commando Group, 10th Air Force, United States Army Air Force, Kalaikunda, India, 1945.



Aircraft flown by 2nd Air Commando Group, 10th Air Force, United States Army Air Force, Kalaikunda, India, 1945.

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